SIR JAMES FRAZER
AND THE
LITERARY IMAGINATION

EDITED BY
ROBERT FRASER



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Also by Robert Fraser

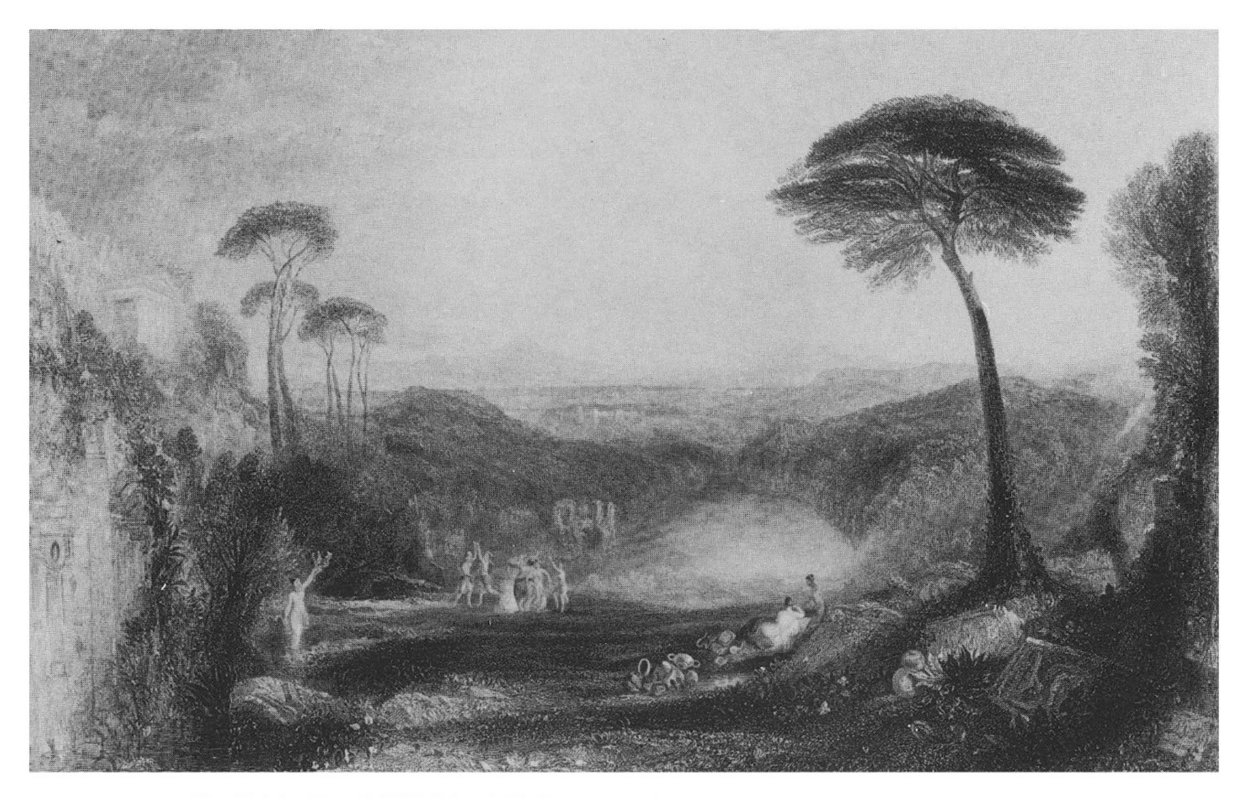
THE MAKING OF *THE GOLDEN BOUGH*
WEST AFRICAN POETRY: A CRITICAL HISTORY
THIS ISLAND PLACE
THE NOVELS OF AYI KWEI ARMAH
THE COLLECTED POEMS OF GEORGE BARKER (*editor*)

Fiction

THE HORNED APE

For the theatre

THE PARISIAN PAINTER
THE LADY OF THE LAND
GOD'S GOOD ENGLISHMAN
SOMETHING IN THE AIR
JANUARY AND MAY
GESUALDO



The Golden Bough (1834) by J. M. W. Turner, described in Frazer's opening paragraph. From 1847 to 1929 this hung in the National Gallery in London. It was then transferred to the Tate Gallery, where it now hangs.

SIR JAMES FRAZER AND THE LITERARY IMAGINATION

ESSAYS IN AFFINITY AND INFLUENCE

Edited by

ROBERT FRASER

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PREFACE

"READ *The Golden Bough*!" Thus Grant Allen, novelist and amateur ethnographer, to his friend and fellow folklorist Edward Clodd in 1890. The book which Allen thus pithily commended, by one J. G. Frazer MA, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, had been published on 1 June, and soon Clodd was its warmest advocate. On 18 December, Thomas Hardy entered in his pocket book,

> Mr E. Clodd this morning gives an excellent neat answer to my question why the superstitions of a remote Asiatic and a Dorset labourer are the same. "The attitude of man" he says "at corresponding levels of culture, before like phenomena, is pretty much the same, your Dorset peasant representing the persistence of the barbaric idea which confuses persons and things, and founds wide generalisations on the slenderest analogies."

This confusion between persons and things was of course a cornerstone of Frazer's analysis of magic. In the very first chapter of *The Golden Bough*, while describing the superstitions of his Asiatic and other subjects, he had observed, "If it is wished to kill a person, an image of him is made and then destroyed." Now, twelve years earlier Hardy had written *The Return of the Native*, in which Eustacia Vye drowns after being melted down in effigy. No wonder he was intrigued, or that Clodd's reply delighted him. Paganism was alive and well in Wessex, and it was not only the farmers who were affected. Six years later in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy was to describe how Sue Bridehead, in her agnostic phase, purchased statuettes of Venus and Apollo from an itinerant hawker and set them up in her lodgings on each side of the crucifix, telling her Anglo-Catholic landlady that they were Mary Magdalene and Peter. Could religious syncretism, could spiritual duplicity, go further?

Clodd, meanwhile, had not been idle. Having educated Hardy, he turned his attention to a younger acquaintance, with whom he was soon discussing myth and folklore. This acquaintance was W. B. Yeats,

interested less in Dorset farmers than in the Irish peasantry, whose legends he was busily transforming into a national mythology. Clodd lent him books, one of which was probably *The Golden Bough*. Yeats communicated his enthusiasm for the work to J. M. Synge, who took copious notes on Frazer's text. When the Second Edition appeared in 1900, Joseph Conrad read extracts in the *Fortnightly Review*, a copy of which he shared with H. G. Wells. Soon we find Lawrence quoting the Second Edition, and with the Third of 1906–15 the floodgates open wide. Eliot calls Frazer "unquestionably the greatest master"; Wyndham Lewis reads *The Scapegoat* and concocts his own Childermass. In 1930 Ludwig Wittgenstein borrows the Abridged Edition and aphorises a set of passionate disagreements in his notebooks, determining to begin his work-in-progress with a consideration of magic. "Ever read *The Golden Bough*?" a drunken character asks Philip Marlowe in Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye* of 1953. "No, too long for you. Shorter version, though. Ought to read it. Proves our sexual habits are pure convention." As the battle of the sexes is joined during the Ritual Dances in Act III of Michael Tippett's opera *The Midsummer Marriage* (1946–52), the chorus declaims, "Fire! St John's Fire!" – a reference surely to Frazer on midsummer conflagrations. One of A. S. Byatt's mother's most cherished possessions was *Leaves from "The Golden Bough"* (1924), "culled by Lady Frazer" and illustrated by H. M. Brock, which in due course she bequeathed to her daughter, along with a lasting enthusiasm. One could, one feels, go on for ever.

Frazer's influence has been charted before, notably in John Vickery's *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"* (1973). But few have registered how deep that influence has been, or how variegated in kind. It has now exercised its peculiar spell over the literary world for a full century. To mark the event, Macmillan, Frazer's own publishers, are issuing this collection, together with a study entitled *The Making of "The Golden Bough": The Origins and Growth of an Argument*. Together they compose a head of Janus, one face looking back to key figures and influences in Frazer's past, the other forwards to the writers and thinkers he in his turn influenced.

Frazer's story begins back in the Glasgow of the 1850s, where he grew up and later absorbed a distinctively Scottish intellectual tradition before moving to Cambridge in 1874. For that story, readers are directed to Robert Ackerman's *J. G. Frazer: The Life and Work* of 1987. For the long process of intellectual ingestion that led to the writing of Frazer's greatest work, they should turn to *The Making of "The Golden Bough"*. The object of the present book is twofold: to ascertain how much Frazer

shared with his contemporaries, how far he drew on a climate of ideas and sensibility common to his time; and to trace the variegated trammels of his influence from the turn of the century to the present day. Lionel Trilling once said that *The Golden Bough* should be the starting-point for any study of modern literature. This collection will have fulfilled its purpose if it manages to demonstrate just how emphatically that is the case.

The book has been some three years in the planning, and is based for the most part on a series of inter-collegiate lectures delivered in the Senate House, University of London, in the Michaelmas term of 1988 under the auspices of the English Board of Studies. Acknowledgements are due to Trinity College, Cambridge, for accommodating a day conference on Frazer's work which effectively served as a catalyst for the whole enterprise; to the English Department of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London, for granting me an Honorary Research Associateship, during my tenure of which the college became in large measure my own Trinity; to the British School at Rome for their hospitality and the use of their matchless library; and to the staff of the Wren Library, at Trinity, and the British Library in London for their unfailing courtesy and support. The publishers and I would like to thank Saul Bellow and Viking Penguin for permission to quote from *Henderson the Rain King*; the trustees of the Tate Gallery for permission to reproduce Turner's painting *The Golden Bough*; Edward Arnold, publishers of F. M. Cornford's *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, for allowing us to reproduce the title-page of that book; and the Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust and the libraries of the State University of New York at Stony Brook and Buffalo (Poetry/Rare Books Collections) and Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (Department of Rare Books), for permission to reproduce Wyndham Lewis's water-colour drawing *Eleusis: Demeter and Persephone* (1912) and the cover-design for *BLAST*, no. 2 (July 1915), and to quote from the *Childermass* manuscripts (all copyright the estate of Mrs G. A. Wyndham Lewis). I am grateful to Dr David Margolis for the Wyndham Lewis photographs and to Graham Eyre for his editorial work on the manuscript. I would also like to tender my personal thanks to my wife and son for living with me during periods when I was thinking about the great Sir James, and not about the dinner.

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A. S. Byatt's fiction includes *Shadow of a Sun* (1963), *The Game* (1967), *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978), *Still Life* (1985), *Sugar and Other Stories* (1987) and *Possession: A Romance* (1990). Her study of the novels of Iris Murdoch, *Degrees of Freedom*, appeared in 1965, and a further, short study in 1976. *Unruly Times*, her study of Wordsworth and Coleridge, was reissued by the Hogarth Press in 1989. Between 1972 and 1983 she lectured in English at University College London. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was from 1986 to 1988 Chairman of the Society of Authors.

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Warwick Gould is Senior Lecturer in English at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London. He is co-editor (with Phillip L. Marcus and Michael J. Sidnell) of *The Secret Rose. Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*, and co-author (with Marjorie Reeves) of *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century*. He is currently working with collaborators on *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, vol. II *(1896–1900)*, and on *W. B. Yeats: Early Essays* and *"The Celtic Twilight"* and *"The Secret Rose"* for the Macmillan *Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*. He is editor of the *Yeats Annual*, also published by Macmillan.

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Lionel Kelly is Director of American Studies in the University of Reading, where he teaches English and American literature. His special interests are eighteenth-century English literature and modern American literature. He is the editor of *Tobias Smollett* in the Routledge Critical Heritage series, and of *Richard Aldington: Papers from the Reading Conference*, and has published articles on Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald.

Phillip L. Marcus is Professor of English at Cornell University. He is co-editor (with Peter Balbert) of *D. H. Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration* and (with Warwick Gould and Michael J. Sidnell) of *The Secret Rose. Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*. He is also one of the general editors of the Cornell Yeats Series, for which he has edited *The Death of Cuchulain*. His other publications include *Yeats and the Beginning of the Irish Renaissance* and *Standish O'Grady*. He is currently working on editions of *Responsibilities* and of *"The Celtic Twilight"* and *"The Secret Rose"* for the Macmillan *Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*, as well as a critical study of Yeats's poetics of national literature.

David Richards did his doctoral research at Churchill College, Cambridge, on anthropology and myth in Scott, Yeats and Soyinka. He then taught at the University of Birmingham until 1983, since when he has been Lecturer in English and Commonwealth Literature at the University of Leeds. He has published on Scott and on African, Caribbean and Canadian literature. He is currently working on a study for the Manchester University Press provisionally entitled *Literature and Anthropology*, and with Shirley Chew and Lynette Hunter is preparing *New Writings in Commonwealth Literature* for the Open University Press.

Deirdre Toomey is research editor of the *Yeats Annual*. She is assistant editor (with John Kelly and David Bindman) of *Graphic Works of William Blake* (1978) and co-editor (with Warwick Gould) of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, vol. II (*1896–1900*), to be published by the Clarendon Press.

A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

Frazer is a much-quoted author, but citations of his greatest work have not always been exact. There are four editions of *The Golden Bough*: the two-volume First Edition of 1890; the three-volume Second Edition of 1900; the twelve-volume Third Edition of 1906–15 (with its supplement *Aftermath* of 1936); and finally the one-volume Abridged Edition of 1922, the pagination of which corresponds to the most recent Papermac reprinting of 1987. To save repetition, these editions are here normally referred to as *GB 1*, *GB 2*, *GB 3* and *GB A*, respectively. Robert Ackerman's *J. G. Frazer: The Life and Work* (Cambridge, 1987) is likewise referred to as "Ackerman", and John B. Vickery's *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"* (Princeton, NJ, 1973) as "Vickery".

The wizened remains of the deathless Sybil are said to have been preserved in a jar or urn which hung in a temple of Apollo at Cumae; and when a group of merry children, tired perhaps, of playing in the sunny streets, sought the shade of the temple and amused themselves by gathering underneath the familiar jar and calling out "Sybil, what do you wish?" a hollow voice like an echo, used to answer from the urn, "I wish to die".

Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* 3, x, 99

'Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω.'

Petronius, *Satyricon*, 48,
epigraph to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922)

I

THE FACE BENEATH THE TEXT: SIR JAMES FRAZER IN HIS TIME

Robert Fraser

ONE should begin where Frazer begins, with the picture. The Cumaean Sybil holds aloft the lambent sprig which Aeneas has just brought from the forest depths. With it she will guide him to and from the Elysian Fields and Anchises, his father. Turner is following Virgil,[1] but unlike Frazer he was no scholar. He needed a translation, Christopher Pitt's of 1743 to be precise. In the picture the Sybil beckons onwards, though earlier she has proclaimed the branch's power:

> But since you long to pass the realms beneath,
> The dreadful realms of darkness and of death,
> Twice the dire Stygian stream to measure o'er,
> And twice the black tartarean gulph explore:
> First, take my counsel, then securely go;
> A mighty tree, that bears a golden bough,
> Grows in a vale surrounded with a grove,
> And sacred to the queen of Stygian Jove.
> Her neather world no mortals can behold,
> Till from the bole they strip the blooming gold.[2]

Turner took his title from Pitt, and Frazer from Turner. Frazer thought the branch was mistletoe, though there is little to identify it as such apart from Virgil's comparing it to the mistletoe,[3] which in that case seems an odd instance of a redundant simile. Virgil's word for the bough was "aureus"; the mistletoe he calls "croceus", or saffron-coloured. When the painting was exhibited in 1834 it was thought dull, but Ruskin was to recognise an affinity with Turner's *Bay of Baiae*, in which the Sybil again appears, dicing with Apollo.[4] In the myth she lost, and like Tithonus enjoyed eternal life but forfeited her beauty. Finally she shrivelled to a skeleton squeaking uncannily from a bottle or jar where Petronius's

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Trimalchio saw the children jeer up at her. "I wish to die", she replied, a quote T. S. Eliot found useful.[5]

It was Ruskin who identified the lake: Avernus not Nemi.[6] The ladies on the right are the Shades.[7] Frazer's connection depends on a source Turner did not know. The only classical strand connecting the branch with the rest of Frazer's theory is a single passage not in Virgil but in Servius's fourth-century commentary on the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas's discovery and use of the bough are linked with a rumour apparently rife in the Rome of the Antonines.[8] This rumour told that the bough was none other than the branch which aspirants to the title of "Rex Nemorensis" or King of the Wood had to fling at the current office-holder before challenging him to mortal combat in a hand-to-hand duel. If they won, they succeeded to his office. The grove in question was situated close to the shore of Lake Nemi, twelve miles to the southeast of Rome among the Alban Hills. It may or may not have been housed in a shrine to Diana which also occupied the lakeside; most classical authors agree that it was, but by Frazer's time archaeological scholarship had cast doubt on the matter.[9] The sanguinary flavour of the rite in any case must have consorted ill with the ambiance of a sanctuary otherwise devoted to the healing of, for the most part, gynaecological complaints. So piquant was the discrepancy that in 1885, the year when the site was at last excavated, Ernest Renan, the idiosyncratic French orientalist and socio-political theorist, wrote a play in which the incumbent to the title relents of its ferocity and attempts to reform the institution, much to the disgust of the people of Rome, who prefers to keep it bloody.[10]

Frazer too was not interested in modifications. He was no more a lover of the rabble than was Renan, but for him the rite was fascinating because it was bloody. It is thus that you have one of the quaintest anomalies in a Victorian twilight replete with anomalies: a highly strung, intensely shy Cambridge Fellow who in real life ventured outside the Great Court of Trinity with extreme reluctance, and whose nerves were so finely tuned that the sound of a poker stoking the fire in the adjoining set of rooms drove him to distraction, devoting most of his life and the best of his mental energies to a rule of kingly succession won by blood and through blood and so rampant that not even the Emperor Caligula could stop it.

The anomaly is so great and the discrepancy so extreme that we of a hundred years thence are in danger of misunderstanding it totally. One is reminded of what F. W. Bateson said about Frazer's Trinity colleague and fellow recluse the scholar–poet A. E. Housman: that his whole style, though meticulous to a fault, spoke of extremes.[11] Housman the poet

created a pastoral mode in which the fatalism, guilt and disguised homosexual yearning of his own deep temperament were transposed to a Shropshire which, though only a few miles from his childhood home of Bromsgrove, he seldom visited and which he is thus obliged to re-create in colours lent by his own needs.

There is a curious parallel with Frazer here. Frazer did not visit Nemi until 1901, shortly after completing the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*.[12] Instead he embellished a landscape he found partly in Turner, partly in Macaulay and partly in the Roman poets, in which a strange toga-clad figure flickers on a sylvan slope crowned with holm-oak and Italian pine and irradiated by the sullen gleam of a drawn sword. One half of it – the decorum and the almost sinister poise – you get in the painting. But the decorum is only part of it, and it interested Frazer least. Like Housman he fudged the detail and does not seem to have minded. He would chase a reference through six or seven inches of footnotes in small type, and when faulted in his Latin would fly into a paroxysm of self-lacerating panic;[13] yet, when it was pointed out to him that in certain respects his word-portrayal of Nemi was ludicrous, he uttered a dry laugh. When completing his great edition of Pausanias in the early 1890s he went round the Greek sites with tape-measure and stop-watch; yet to the last his Nemi remains a place principally of the imagination.

We shall never understand the distance that separates Frazer's time from our own until we concede that, though crucial in its influence on the modern mind, Frazer's work comes from quite another stable. The differences need spelling out because the relative closeness of the period to our own is apt to breed a sense of familiarity which in this instance is profoundly misleading. We are no longer habituated to the delicious indirectness of the Victorians. Frazer beings his work with a picture. If you were arguing in the modern fashion you would scarcely do that, but plunge into the thick of the matter and state your intentions deliberately. You would do this because the characteristic modes of twentieth-century academic discourse are engagement and analysis. But the Victorians often seemed to have argued most persuasively, written most eloquently, when the real source of their concern lay in subterranean depths among anxieties their surface scarcely admits. The characteristic mode of Victorian discourse is thus displacement. It is because this habit of mind is so alien to our own inclinations that we need to examine it carefully.

If, since the Second World War, which closed four years after his death, Frazer's reputation has fallen into desuetude, it is because we have failed to read him with unconscious habits which Victorian readers

took for granted but which we with our very different expectations only recognise when made explicit. When Frazer's protégé Bronisław Malinowski came to reissue his influential *The Sexual Life of Savages* in 1932, he prefaced it with recantation of speculations about the nature of early man which he had published during the First World War while still under Frazer's spell.[14] Twentieth-century social anthropology has been dominated by that recantation. Since Malinowski is the founder of the modern approach to field-work, Frazer has ever since been viewed as an empiricist who failed. The causes of that supposed failure are given risible form in Ruth Benedict's version of the dinner-table conversation between Frazer and William James at the Hôtel Printemps in Rome in 1900 during the very trip when Frazer at last visited Nemi.[15] The story is probably apocryphal, but it makes good copy:

> WILLIAM JAMES. Tell me, Doctor Frazer, have you ever met these natives of whom your write so assiduously?
> DOCTOR FRAZER. But heaven forbid!

It is not without significance that this anecdote has no known source in James, who reports the meeting quite differently.[16] The story tells us far more about functionialism than it does about Frazer. Ms Benedict misunderstood. The distance was the very point.

Another anecdote is of Thomas Hardy meeting Frazer the following year during a pilgrimage both of them made to Edward Fitzgerald's grave in Suffolk. Hardy found Frazer impossibly taciturn: "an interesting, modest man who conceals his knowledge of strange miscellanea until you bore of it".[17] I'm not sure whether Hardy's "bore" here is fortuitous, but James too had found Frazer sullen and grumpy. To us this seems extravagant because a man who writes thirty-nine books and then says nothing at dinner is in our eyes a variety of freak. We think like this because we have come to mistrust or misinterpret silence. Housman too is unfashionable, and Housman too said little. Both of these men interestingly were lifelong associates of Edmund Gosse, who said too much.

In a recent biography of Frazer, Robert Ackerman has connected Frazer's seclusion with his lack of empirical success, a view which in reviewing the book the anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt enthusiastically endorsed.[18] The point is both understandable and at the same time richly mistaken. If the proper study of anthropology is man, you might expect a practitioner who locked himself in his rooms for eighteen hours a day with little, indeed decreasing, social contact constantly to draw false

conclusions. But Frazer only says that his methods are empirical; in fact, as his critics have not been slow to point out, there is little that is empirical about them. In practice they are a blend of inductive hunches and inspired leaps of the imagination. More precisely, they partake of that mode of inductive leap-frogging known as the "comparative method". Frazer got this from his immediate predecessors in the ethnographic field: from John Ferguson M'Lennan, Edward Burnett Tylor and, more pertinently, from his friend and fellow Scot William Robertson Smith. The method had earlier been used by Henry Maine in his study of ancient law, but had originated in the late eighteenth century as a way of plumbing the mystery of the origin of language. By way of introducing it one can do little better than quote the philologist William Jones addressing the Asiatic Society in Calcutta on 2 February 1786 on the subject of Sanskrit

> the Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure: more perfect than the Latin, and more copious than the Greek, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of its verbs, and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident: so strong, indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists.[19]

There you have it: the developmental axis, the broad transcultural sweep, the insistence on a common origin which in this case turned out to be Indo-European. A hundred years later the search for a common source of language had become the search for a common root of civilisation. Though Frazer renounced the philological method, the quest drove him to turn over a number of stones in quick succession, sometimes returning for a second peep: the origins of totemism, the marriage system, the folklore of the Bible, the legends and customs of the ancients all came within the ambit of his sharp-eyed Glaswegian scrutiny. No stone proved more rewarding than the rites of the grove at Nemi, which first attracted his attention in 1889. If *The Golden Bough* proves to be his greatest and most rewarding book, it is partly because of the nature of the stone, and partly because the facts found writhing beneath caused him for once to look in a new and interesting way. There are times when the objects of his inquiry elicited from him no more than that hard-nosed, dogged curiosity he shared with his pharmacist father and which his photographs show so well. But when he came to Nemi he flinched, and in that

momentary reflex lies the whole history of his greatness.

It is this which is apt to make us feel uncomfortable. We are used, I think, to two different kinds of prose discourse – the imaginative and the analytical – and are unhappy when the two meet. But Frazer had no such divisive tradition of discourse on which to draw. Instead I am going to suggest that he had two principal weapons in his armoury: what I shall call irony and what I shall call displacement. In the first he is very much the child of the eighteenth, in the second very much the child of the nineteenth century. I shall illustrate both by reference to his discussion of two subjects which loom large in the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*: the myth of Adonis and the rituals of the Roman and Near Eastern Saturnalia.

It had been Robertson Smith's contention that the Adonis rites, which he took to be pervasive even in biblical Jerusalem, illustrated something he himself had called the annual "death of the god" in Semitic religion.[20] Bearing this in mind, it is surprising that Adonis receives only a few pages in the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*, pages which are scarcely amplified in the Second.[21] It was only in 1906, when working over his text in preparation for a third edition, that the idea of a separate volume (eventually two) devoted to Adonis and analogous cults seems to have occurred to Frazer.[22] So excited does he seem to have been at the prospect that he decided to start with it, leaving his amplification of the opening chapters on magic until later.

And why start here, with matters to all appearance remote from Nemi and the searching concerns of the treatise as a whole? Because in the meantime Frazer had started learning Hebrew.[23] To be sure he had only been at it a few months, though the company in which he studied was distinguished: Jane Harrison, F. M. Cornford, Arthur Cook – all those who are now sometimes known collectively as the Cambridge ritualists and are sometimes seen as Frazer's disciples. By 1905, when he began work on his *Adonis, Attis, Osiris; Studies in the History of Oriental Religion*, they cannot have proceeded very far, but far enough to notice that the Hebrew word *'adon* meant "lord", far enough too to note far-reaching parallels between Greek ritual and belief and Semitic.

It was Frazer's intention that *Adonis* should be published in advance of the book as a whole with a stipulation that it be considered part of the greater work.[24] In recommending this plan to his publisher, George Macmillan, Frazer was typically self-disparaging: the Adonis book had, he said, "nothing amusing in it". In fact, the book was so popular that by 1915, when Frazer brought *The Golden Bough* as a whole to a close, *Adonis* had individually gone through three editions.[25] The last, of 1914,

begins with a long discussion of the Adonis figure in Semitic religion. Adonis had a world-famous shrine in Byblos in Phoenicia. He had a shrine too in Cyprus, and it was through diffusion from Western Asia that his cult came to Greece. As the war-sick Athenians marched down to Piraeus to set sail for the Sicilian expedition, an unearthly wailing accosted their ears. It was almost midsummer, and the women were wailing for Adonis. The embarkation scene comes from Plutarch, the date of sailing from Thucydides.[26] It is typical of Frazer that he should have weaved these two strands together to make an unforgettable picture.

But it was not Alcibiades and his army alone who heard Adonis's death-lament. The prophet Ezekiel too heard it echoing through the gates of the city of Jerusalem as the Jewish women bewailed the demise of their *'adon*, their Lord.[27] To him the sound was abhorent, but that is not important: the fact is that he heard it. The Phoenician god, then, had adherents in Judah: it was the cult which flourished here, not merely the word. If the ceremonials provoked Ezekiel to such ire, they must have been a real threat, must in fact have been deep-seated in the affections of the people. At times of civic disturbance such as Ezekiel witnessed, it is the deep-seated yearnings of a people that break surface, not their superficial beliefs. Beneath the official afflatus of Jewish religion, was Yahweh perhaps none other than Adonis?

It is just possible, and Frazer argues the point less with energy than with a sort of beautiful circumspection. At one point he is describing the invasion by David of Jebusite Jerusalem, during an earlier period of that city's turbulent history. The incident is described in the second book of Samuel,[28] and Frazer makes a grim frolic with it. Samuel describes how the Jebusites, secure within their fastness and in the certainties of an atavistic faith, rail down at David's insurgent forces: "Except thou take away the blind and the lame thou shalt not come hither." This is Frazer:

> the calm confidence with which the Jebusite inhabitants of the city awaited his attack, jeering at the besiegers from the battlements, may well have been born of a firm trust in the local deity rather than in the height and thickness of their grim old walls. Certainly the obstinacy with which in after ages the Jews defended the same place against the armies of Assyria and Rome sprang in large measure from a similar faith in the God of Zion.[29]

It is a meticulously etched passage, but its discretion is barbed. Of course the people of Jerusalem, hard-pressed by forces to the East and later from Rome, plighted their trust in a "similar" deity to that which had

once upheld the Jebusites in their insolence. Of course is was the "God of Zion" that sustained them, because, Frazer is saying, or rather implying with a sort of donnish twinkle, the God of Mount Zion was the same in both instances. The lofty monotheism of the latter-day Hebrews was built on a citadel older than they knew; it was the ancient Semitic god of the land, the *'adon* of the place, on whom their hopes were founded. And that is not all: the Jews, like the Jebusites before them, were defeated. Better put your faith in the walls.

It is Frazer at his most devious and wicked, dealing out parallel instances like a pack of cards, the dead set of his countenance giving nothing away until, spreading one's hand out before one, one comes upon the Joker. It is the same puckish calm that enables him later in the same text to convert Bethlehem into a shrine to Adonis[30] or to talk one into accepting the equivalence of sacred prostitutes and of nuns.[31] "It is thus", says Frazer, crumbling the bread, "that the folly of mankind finds vent in opposite extremes alike harmful and deplorable." By the time one notices the tremor in his voice, it is too late. The point has gone home.

It is a peculiar brand of irony – part detachment, part tact, part pure devilry. It takes delight in its own devices. Where does it come from? Well, it is most certainly Scottish, and it is more the product of the eighteenth than of the nineteenth century; or rather say that it is the product of that peculiar outcrop of eighteenth-century letters we revere under the name of the Scottish Enlightenment. Frazer has in fact a fairly direct antecedent in David Hume, whose shade summons up both that insistence on the empirical basis of all inquiry which in Scotland later gave rise to the "common-sense" school of Thomas Reid, and that darker side to Augustan thought which conceded that nothing was in fact knowable beyond the circle of our perceptions, and which subsequently led through the mockeries of Blake to the Romantic movement and much that the Victorians themselves took for granted. Hume's was a conjuring-trick, and, like Frazer, he achieved his difficult balance through tone. Listen to him discoursing on the mysteries of religious belief at the end of the chapter on miracles in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*:

> Our most holy religion is founded on faith not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure . . . upon the whole, we may conclude that the Christian religion not only was first attended by miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one.[32]

Faith then is a miracle, but what price miracles? Gibbon is the master of the anti-clerical aside, but he had a close runner in Hume.

In a slightly later chapter of *Adonis* Frazer follows Lucian in describing the weird gyrobatics of the priests of the Phrygian God Attis, and how the novices, having summarily castrated themselves over his sacred effigy, then "honoured", as he puts it, the households of the onlookers by hurling their severed genitalia into the family compound.[33] The feast of Attis occured in the spring, uncannily close to the Christian festival of Easter. This proximity caused some consternation in the ranks of the two cults, and Frazer volunteers to sort the problem out for them:

> In these unseemly bickerings the heathen took what to the superificial observer might seem to be strong ground by arguing that their god was the older and therefore the original, not the counterfeit, since as a general rule an original is older than its copy. This feeble argument the Christians easily rebutted. They admitted, indeed, that in point of time Christ was the junior deity, but they triumphantly demonstrated his real seniority by falling back on the subtlety of Satan, who on so important an occasion had surpassed himself by inverting the usual order of nature.[34]

It is a characteristic piece of Frazerian arbitration, to which, suitably sheathed, he bears a two-edged sword. The devotees of Attis with commendable common sense advance what is patently the stronger argument. But they are pagans, of course, and so they must be wrong. The Christians triumphantly repel their case by means of a casuistry which is palpably absurd. And where does the balance lie? In the flickering eyeball of Frazer as he glances, half expectantly, half sardonically, from one to the other. The expression in that eye is everything. It is the Joker in the pack, the face beneath the text.

It is this element in Frazer which has caused commentators to call his wit reductive. But look again at the face above the table and you will notice something else going on. Irony is only one aspect of Frazer's Janus-like visage; the other is fear. The things of which he speaks are dreadful as well as farcical; they are also holy. You cannot deny this element of awestruck dread in Frazer, and if you do you have completely missed his meaning. You have to listen as well as look. To listen for example to the bells that resound over Nemi. Those bells come from Renan, from a passage in which the French thinker reproaches the German theologican Feuerbach for his "exclusive and haughty Germanism" and bids him replenish his spirit at the springs of Catholic Italy.[35]

Frazer is too cautious to tell us to do the same. Instead he includes a coded message, and transposes his devotion to Nemi.

This may seem an odd tactic for a declared sceptic, but his text is full of such resonances. Amid the plethora of his facts Frazer often seems troubled by something the psalmist defined as the beauty of holiness. Witness his evocation of the lovestruck Astarte declining into the arms of her lover Tammuz like a falling star,[36] or of the dog-star Sirius, emblem of Egyptian Isis, peeping over the great bowl of the Mediterranean on July mornings, *stella maris*, star of the sea.[37] These refinements are more than mere scene-painting. In his biography of Frazer Ackerman refers to such moments as "special effects",[38] as if Frazer rolled on the scenery and the beautiful prose when it suited his purpose. This is certainly what his successors thought, and it is perhaps for this reason that they have abandoned such felicities and returned to what Frazer once called "the uncouth jargon of the schools".[39] But in the last analysis it is these moments that make the book memorable. If we still linger over them, it is, I would suggest, because they lie very close to the heart of the work. Frazer's enthusiasms are in fact rather selective: he writes scathingly of Attis, but always movingly of Adonis, relating him at one point to the pathos of the Michelangelo *Pietà*, and implicity with the whole elegiac tradition of the West.[40] The emotional investment is such that one wonders whether something rather interesting is not going on. Does the title of *The Dying God* refer to a deity nearer home? The working title for *The Scapegoat* was *The Man of Sorrows*.[41] It is as if Frazer's own religious preoccupations have been displaced elsewhere. One recalls what Peter Levi has to say of Pausanias, whom eighty years after Frazer he edited:

> There is no doubt that he was a true believer in the most sacred of these traditions: he accepted the warning of a dream and understood the punishment of a god. He was perhaps like his greatest editor, Sir James Frazer (whose entire lifework had its roots in Pausanias), in that all of his scholarship and topography and encyclopaedic curiosity were a burden undertaken to satisfy a deeper anxiety which had once been apprehended in religious terms. The collapse of ancient religion or some deeper collapse was the unspoken object of his studies.[42]

One is reminded of Arnold describing the death of Balder when he means another god and another death, the consequences of which he is not equipped to face.[43] Frazer too has his Balder motif, and, when the god's flaming bier is pushed out into the blue-black waters of the fjord,

seems almost to join the mourners huddled on the shore.[44] Another debt to Lucian is his description of the River Adonis[45] as every spring its waters gush red from Mount Lebanon, harbinger of the God's annual demise. Such passages, I would suggest, are part of a meticulous but possibly subconscious device whereby Frazer displaces his own lovely unease to a landscape, part factual and part of his own devising, where its terror can do no harm.

Frazer visited none of his Near Eastern sites. To him they were part of a Levantine hinterland re-created by the imagination in colours lent by an omnivorous classical reading. Among the nineteenth-century scholars who did visit the Levant was Renan, to whose accounts of the Phoenician sites of Lebanon Frazer is peculiarly indebted.[46] During his sojourn the Frenchman paid his respects to the Holy Land, and on his return succumbed to a coma on the slopes of Mount Lebanon from which he awoke to find his sister, the companion of his travels, dead. The solemnity of that awakening irradiates Frazer's own account where it blends with the poppy-drugged poignancy of a land his book-lined imagination was driven to depict as a perpetual theatre of death and renewal.[47] The pathos of that feeling is one with the displacement of the sensibility of which we earlier spoke, and it pervades the writing at every point.

The question for us who come to Frazer as to a late Victorian pulled by the two-way torsion of religion and science is wherein the pathos consists. Is the story of Adonis poignant because it anticipates the sufferings of Christ, or is the Christian myth so potent because it draws on a wellspring fed by generations of Middle Eastern cults? In the chapter on the crucifixion of Christ with which in 1900 Frazer concluded his discussion of the Saturnalia, and which in 1913 he sagely banished to an appendix, he seems to set out the alternatives clearly:

> In the great army of martyrs who in many ages and in many lands, not in Asia only, have died a cruel death in the character of gods, the devout Christian will doubtless discern types and forerunners of the coming Saviour – stars that heralded the advent of the Sun of Righteousness – earthen vessels wherein it pleased the divine wisdom to set before hungry souls the bread of heaven. The sceptic on the other hand, with equal confidence, will reduce Jesus of Nazareth to the level of a multitude of other victims of a barbarous superstition; and will see in him no more than a mortal teacher, whom the fortunate accident of his execution invested with the crown, not merely of a martyr, but of a god. The divergence between these views is wide and

> deep. Which is the truer and will in the end prevail? Time will decide the question of prevalance if not of truth.[48]

But "What is truth?" as Pilate inquired.[49] Like Frazer he was not entirely jesting, though neither stayed for an answer. We are all in danger, I think, of simplifying Frazer's particular brand of truth, since it is not always that which he proclaims. In the Preface to the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* Frazer compares himself to a field-battery shelling the ivy-clad towers of superstition.[50] But his style more often resembles a caress than a gun; and for much of his life he looked out for solace on courts hung by consoling ivy clusters. In Cambridge he attended morning service at Great St Mary's with some regularity,[51] and he was as fond of the venerable courts of Trinity as was that other iconoclast Earl Russell. His discussion of religion too is full of a sort of pious wonderment.

There is an odd mismatch here between his practice and his theory. In the Second Edition he introduced a tripartite division of mankind's development into three stages which he called Magic, Religion and Science.[52] Magic was the deployment of the inductive method on limited evidence, yielding a sort of proto-science which satisfied early man until he started noticing that not all of his experiments were working. When that happened, he prostrated himself before the gods and instigated the institutions of religion. Then the gods too deserted him, and he went back to the inductive method, improving it this time so that it became fully fledged science.

Frazer likes to portray himself as a scientist and so presumably is through to the third stage. But at times he seems to be consumed with devout astonishment at his own subject matter. At such moments his ideas go one way, and his prose another. Examples abound, but consider for example the self-sacrifice of the Christian soldier at Durostorum who gave his life rather than play Mock King at the Feast of Saturn.[53] Frazer found the bleak facts in a fourth-century manuscript recently uncovered by the Belgian scholar Franz Cumont, but he converted them into a prose poem. Poetry too transfigures his account of the pageant of the Saturnalia and the related Near Eastern festivals of the Zagmuk, Sacaea and the Jewish Purim as he follows them across the plains of Western Assyria.[54]

The scientific method cannot quite contain Frazer. Like the Player Queen, he doth protest too much. And, as with Gertrude, one wonders if he knows it. For it is just possible that mankind has never slaughtered its kings nor partaken of physical or symbolic nutriment in consequence. It is just possible that all of the elaborate apparatus of parallel instances

which Frazer invokes has no more substance than a straw in the wind. It is also distinctly possible, as the functionalists would have us believe, that, even were these observations possessed of universal relevance, we ought to behave as if they were not. But the dog will have his bone: you cannot leave it at that. *The Golden Bough* is a work of extraordinary cumulative power. It would not possess that power did it not stir forces far deeper than those its thesis admits. For many readers, I would suggest, this appeal lies in the never-to-be dispelled suspicion that the common-sense thesis cannot quite account for the tremendous heroism of the act. "Put that account of the King of the Wood at Nemi together with the phrase 'the majesty of death'", wrote Wittgenstein, "and you will see that they are one."[55] On that peculiar compound of majesty, so suggestive in its possibilities, the literary imagination of Europe has now fed for a hundred years.

It is thus little wonder that Frazer's text has appealed so irresistibly to twentieth-century writers tormented by something that appeared to be lacking in their own times. W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis were all in their different ways intrigued by Frazer because he reminded him of something the modern self-consciousness seemed to have suppressed. The fact that the modern self-consciousness helped them to find it again is by the way. When prevailed upon to annotate *The Waste Land*, Eliot spoke of *The Golden Bough* as "a work of anthropology . . . which has influenced our generation profoundly".[56] This undeniable power cannot be said to stem from its documentation alone, nor can it be said precisely to proceed in spite of it. But the summation of the book's strength seems to be this: that, as the pages unfurl, each of its readers, out of his very individual experience, evinces the distinct impression that he is remembering something.

This phenomenon of remembrance is what Plato termed ἀνάμνησις[57] and it is essential to the work's procedures; nor did it pass Frazer by. For much of his life he was tormented by this simple question: do we respond to myths because they remind us of rituals, or do we perform rituals to restore the myths? It was one of the central conundrums of late-nineteenth-century anthropology, and Frazer never quite seemed to be able to make up his mind about it. The question ran deeper than a simple debate concerning priority. If myths recounted rituals, then the men and women it embodied in some manner existed, but, if ritual enshrined myth, the people too were mythic.[58] Despite his early assurance, Frazer had difficulty sorting out these alternatives. Like most of his classical contemporaries he had been brought up on the simple-minded euhemerism of Lemprière's *Dictionary*, a child's-eye view of

legend that modern scholarship had taught him to despise. Max Müller's "disease of language" school had meanwhile taught men to see mythology as a falling-away from a state of intellectual grace, but in that case what preceded it? What exactly did myth describe? The early versions of *The Golden Bough* balk the issue, but it is not difficult to see that a euhemerist vision was implicit in it from the very beginning.[59] The priest of Nemi at least was a man, or rather succession of men; his legend was an accretion.

It is for this reason that the burgeoning in the Second Edition of the sections concerning the Roman and Asian Saturnalia was so significant a departure. For, whatever one said about the Mock King of the Saturnalia celebrations, he was both a myth and a man; to ask which came first was silly. The darker problem was whether such mock kings harked back to an earlier and widespread practice of human sacrifice. Frazer eventually resolved this difficulty by taking a close look at that mythic couple from ancient Mesopotamia: Queen Semiramis and King Sardanapalus.[60] Diodorus Siculus has described an historic Queen Semiramis who persuaded her husband to yield his throne to her for five days, after which she had him murdered and reigned in his stead;[61] another version of the same tale has it that, like the Empress Catherine, Semiramis would lure handsome courtiers to her bed, but that unlike the Empress she then destroyed them.[62] But the grave of Semiramis at Zela was also the seat of the goddess Anaitis, whom Smith had identified with Astarte, the Semitis goddess of fertility.[63] Was Semiramis Astarte, and Astarte Semiramis? Similarly, legend made of Sardanapalus a debauched weakling who lost his kingdom by default, and Byron, drawing on the legend, makes of him an engaging though highly intelligent fop.[64] It seems more likely that he was a king of Assyria famous for his feats of arms; the reputation for debauchery comes from his impersonation year by year at the annual Sacaea celebrations, in which, like the Mock King at Rome, he had dwindled into a buffoon.[65] Were Semiramis and Sardanapalus then actors on some cosmic stage, reiterating year by year the fatal loves of the gods? If that was the case, Frazer's problem was solved. Myth and ritual were reconciled in drama.

It is thus that in the last resort Frazer comes to see the whole of human history as a kind of perpetually sustained mystery play in which historical personages, ultimately in mock display but earlier in grim earnest, play out the hapless masquerade of all created things. It is a vision at once daunting and noble, holding out the prospect of all ritual as a perennially renewed tragic presentation in which as onlookers we are, like the King of the Wood, involved both as perpetrator and victim. It is a process on which Aristotle is a fitter commentator than Jung. With

it we seem to understand why, since Frazer, Attic theatre has never looked quite the same again. We also seem to understand why in perusing Frazer's disquisition we experience a sensation at once so familiar and so strange. I said that each of us feels that he is remembering something. What we seem to be remembering is not merely that each of us somewhere sometime killed a god, but that we were the god that we killed. With such truths to impart, is it any wonder Sir James said so little over the soup?

NOTES

1. *Aeneid*, VI 42–211. Frazer's opening question was probably more appropriate in his time than our own. In 1890 the picture hung in the National Gallery; it is now in the Clore extension of the Tate. See Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1977; rev. ed. 1984), no. 355, pp. 204–5.
2. Christopher Pitt, *The Aeneid of Virgil* (London, 1743), I, 177, translating VI, 133–9.
3. *Aeneid*, VI, 205–9.
4. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903–12), VII, 420–1. See also XIII, 133 and 159.
5. Petronius, *Satyricon*, 48, used as epigraph to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922); *GB 3*, X, 99.
6. *The Works of John Ruskin*, VII, 421.
7. The identification is John Gage's. See his "Turner and Stourhead: The Making of a Classicist?", *Art Quarterly*, XXXVII (1974), 59–87, esp. pp. 74–5.
8. Servius on Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 136. See also Robert Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough": The Origins and Growth of an Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 191.
9. See Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough"*, pp. 10–11.
10. Ernest Renan, *Le Prêtre de Nemi* (Paris, 1885).
11. F. W. Bateson, "The Poetry of Emphasis", in Christopher Ricks (ed.), *A. E. Housman: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 130–45: repr. in F. W. Bateson, *Essays in Critical Dissent* (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 100–16. See esp. p. 104: "Whatever was said or done or suffered by this man surprises us by its excess."
12. Cf. Ackerman, p. 174.
13. For an especially gruelling example of this, see Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough"*, p. 100.
14. Bronisław Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932). See esp. pp. xxi ff.
15. Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Humanities", *American Anthropologist*, 59, no. 4, pt 1 (October–December 1948), 587. This was Benedict's speech as retiring President of the Anthropological Association, delivered at Albuquerque, New Mexico, in December 1947. The story has attained

widespread currency, but seems to have no foundation whatsoever.

16. See *The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James (London: Longman, 1920), II, 139–40. Cf. also Ackerman, pp. 174–5.
17. *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), II (1893–1901), 288.
18. Ackerman, p. 126, though to be honest he blames Lady Frazer.
19. Sir William Jones, *Discourses Delivered before the Asiatic Society* (London, 1821), p. 28.
20. William Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1889), pp. 345ff., 391ff.
21. *GB 1*, I, 279–82. *GB 2*, II, 115–30.
22. Cf. Frazer's letter to George Macmillan, 8 March 1906, British Library Add. MS 55136.
23. Ackerman, pp. 183–4.
24. See his letter to Macmillan, 15 May 1906, British Library Add. MS 55136.
25. This has led to some confusion. Technically, all three editions comprise part IV of the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*. But by the time Frazer had completed *Balder the Beautiful*, in 1913, the second edition of *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (1907) was already in need of revision. Its two volumes were therefore expanded into two, issued as vols V and VI of *GB 3* in 1914. It is to this last, two-volume version that all subsequent page references to *Adoms* refer.
26. Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 18; *Nicias*, 13. Thucydides, VI.30.
27. Ezekiel, 8:14.
28. Samuel 5:6.
29. *GB 3*, V, 19–20.
30. *GB 3*, V, 257–9.
31. *GB 3*, V, 40–1.
32. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, The Philosophical Works*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grace (London, 1882), IV, 107–8.
33. *GB 3*, V, 269–70, following Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, 49–51.
34. *GB 3*, V, 309–10. The passage owes something to Franz Cumont, *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (Paris: Musée Guimet, 1909), pp. 106ff., 333ff.
35. J. G. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1918), III, 453–4. Also quoted in "Address to the Ernest Renan Society delivered at the Ecole du Louvre, December 11th, 1920", repr. in *Garnered Sheaves* (London: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 277–9.
36. *GB 3*, V, 259, following Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II.5.
37. *GB 3*, VI, 117–19.
38. Ackerman, p. 237. It is the same tendency that induces Ackerman to call such passages "word painting" (p. 138) and "fine writing" (p. 236, as if bad writing were somehow preferable). Ackerman goes so far as to refer to Frazer's style as "hopelessly literary" (p. 236), as if this were some sort of a crime. Would he refer to a piece of meticulous field-work as "hopelessly anthropological"? For a more sympathetic approach, see Peter Ackroyd, "Don of Magic and Religion", *The Times*, 10 December 1987, p. 21.
39. J. G. Frazer, "Speech on Receiving the Freedom of the City of Glasgow",

Creation and Evolution in Primitive Cosmogonies and Other Aeces (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 123.
40. *GB 3*, v, p. 257.
41. See Frazer's letter to Macmillan, British Library Add. MS 55137: also Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough"*, pp. 142, 158.
42. *Pausanias's Guide to Greece*, tr. and introd. Peter Levi (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), I, 2–3.
43. Matthew Arnold, *Balder Dead* (1855), III.160–206, is especially suggestive.
44. *GB 3*, x, 102.
45. *GB 3*, v, 30 and 224–7, following Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, 8.
46. Ernest Renan, *Mission de Phénicie* (Paris, 1864).
47. Cf. *GB 3*, v, 233–5. The death-drugged atmosphere is not, however, unique to Renan. It appears, for example, in Swinburne's "Garden of Proserpine" (1866), published two years after Renan's book. Swinburne, it may be noted, was familiar with Renan's work.
48. *GB 2*, II, 197–8: *GB 3*, IX, 422–3.
49. Bacon's essay on truth, opening sentence.
50. *GB 2*, I, xxii.
51. R. Angus Downie, *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), p. 21.
52. *GB 2*, II, 7–128, esp. pp. 61–74.
53. *GB 2*, III, 140–3, *GB 3*, IX, 308–12.
54. *GB 2*, III, 150–200: *GB 3*, IX, 354–407.
55. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer's "Golden Bough"*, ed. Rush Rhees (Retford, Notts: Brynmill Press, 1979), p. 3e.
56. T. S. Eliot, note to *The Waste Land* (1922). For a discussion of the influence of *The Golden Bough* in *The Waste Land*, see below, essay X.
57. The word *anamnesis*, in this sense of the resurgence of something half-remembered, occurs most evocatively in the *Phaedo*, 72e and 92d. It is not without significance that Frazer wrote his fellowship dissertation on Plato.
58. The discussion is largely implicit in *GB 3*, IX, 385–6.
59. For an explicit acknowledgement of the relevance of euhemerism, see J. G. Frazer, *The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead*, I (London: Macmillan, 1913), 24–5.
60. *GB 3*, IX, 368–88.
61. Diodorus Siculus, II, 20.
62. Diodorus Siculus, II, 13.
63. William Robertson Smith, "Ctesias and the Semiramis Legend", *English Historical Review*, II (1887), 303–17.
64. Diodorus Siculus, II.23, 27; Athenaeus, XII, 38ff; Byron, *Sardanapalus*, I.ii, and *passim*.
65. *GB 3*, IX, 388.

II

FRAZER AND SCOTTISH ROMANTICISM: SCOTT, STEVENSON AND *THE GOLDEN BOUGH*

Robert Crawford

IN all the twilit continent of his works, *Pasha the Pom* must be the least-known book by J. G. Frazer. Written with Lady Frazer and published in 1937, it is a children's story whose origins lie in an earlier (1909) French reading-book. *Pasha the Pom* clearly contains a picture of the Frazer household and of the author of *The Golden Bough*. He features as Monsieur Troisel, the holiday-hating biblioholic who spends dinner time showing to his wife "the proof-sheets of his pogonological treatise" and discoursing on his chosen topic: "the study of the beard and its history [which] goes back to the sixth day of the Creation". In this household "the years pass, slow and changeless. . . . The treatise on pogonology waxes immeasurably. The ink-stained shelves in the library groan and bend under the weight of untold reams of paper."[1]

In *Pasha the Pom*, Frazer and his wife caricature themselves, but we recognise the caricatures. Published too late to be included in Besterman's listing of the Frazer canon, and ignored by Robert Ackerman, this rather sad little production published during the anthropologist's declining years is more than just a curiosity. Aimed at an audience of children, its presentation of Frazer as a child in all practical matters reminds us that to some extent there remained inside the Cambridge don a little boy who never grew up.

Frazer was not the Peter Pan invented by his Scottish contemporary J. M. Barrie, but there is enough in his voluminously reticent work to suggest that the formative experiences of his own childhood, and the Scottish traditions in which he was educated, remained crucial to his later writing. If Frazer's own work belongs to a cultural and literary tradition more particular than that of "anthropology", then it belongs to a Scottish tradition.

Ackerman's fine biography does much to reinstate this factor in our view of Frazer, as did the work of Robert Alun Jones.[2] Ackerman

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particularly draws attention to the importance of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy as an influential part of Frazer's heritage, but he passes too swiftly over Frazer's first twenty-one years. A good deal of the information we might like to have about this formative period is lost. Frazer's letters to his family were all destroyed by one of his sisters after the death of his parents.[3] But there is much to be learned from examining what we do know about Frazer's boyhood and youth, since these moulded not just his philosophical stance but his general literary and cultural orientation.

Like many children, Frazer probably *heard* books before he read them. Describing his father (whose library he inherited), Frazer stresses both religion and literature. These came together on Sundays, when "in the evening our father read to us a good or edifying book. Among the volumes to which I listened I seem to remember *The Fairchild Family*, Thomson's *The Land of the Book*, and Bunyan's *Holy War*." Bunyan's book would have taught Frazer, among other things, that the enemy of "Mansoul" was "King of the *Blacks* or *Negroes*".[4] *The Fairchild Family*, by Mary Martha Sherwood, was popular and uplifting children's fiction. Much more interesting from the point of view of Frazer's later career is *The Land of the Book* by William McLure Thomson. Theologically acceptable to the "staunch Presbyterian" Daniel Frazer, Thomson was an American who had spent thirty years as a missionary in Syria and Palestine. His 1859 book is subtitled *Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery of the Holy Land*. The subject is presented geographically, as the author takes his audience vividly across the terrain of the Middle East, presenting numerous local customs and antiquities. Many, but not all, of these are related to scriptural passages, and Thomson likes to work into his text evidence drawn from a wide variety of earlier writers and travellers, ranging from Herodotos to Lane. The reader is often addressed directly, as if he were right beside Thomson moving through the landscape past old temples and traces of local curiosities, which sometimes involve considerable narrative digressions. The treatment of the subject matter and the guidebook technique may seem odd to the modern reader, but they look less peculiar when set beside that text which Frazer's mother clutched on her death-bed: her son's edition of Pausanias's *Guide to Greece*.

All through his career, Frazer delighted in presenting landscape set-pieces and relating these to local practices and beliefs. Some of the most vivid scene-painting in the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* comes in the two volumes of *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, where Frazer evokes Middle Eastern scenes which he had never visited, though, thanks to the Bible

and McLure Thomson, these landscapes had been familiar from his Scottish boyhood. The famous opening of *The Golden Bough*, with its description of the sacred grove at Nemi, is but the best-known among hundreds of landscape passages. Some of these were even anthologised separately in collections such as Frazer's *Studies in Greek Scenery, Legend and History* (1917). From his earliest childhood, Frazer was familiar with writing of this kind. It comes as no surprise to find that, fifty years after Frazer's father had first read it to him, William McLure Thomson's work is listed in the bibliography to the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*.

Frazer knew also that his own land was invested with sacred sites, and that topography, lore and landscape were bound together. Among his father's books, he recalled, "*Tales of the Covenanters* and Wilson's *Tales of the Borders* served to kindle or nurse the fires of piety and patriotism in my Scottish heart." [5] Robert Pollok's Covenanting stories such as "Heather of the Glen" and "The Banks of the Irvine" presented tales of Claverhouse, religious persecutions and violent, sectarian pursuits over a Scottish territory that had already been traversed by Sir Walter Scott in *Old Mortality*. John Wilson's *Tales of the Borders* also followed in Scott's footsteps in its anthologising of traditional materials drawn from the geographical area covered by *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Wilson, a Border printer, knew Scott. His *Tales*, collected in the 1830s, are not simply fictions; they are also folklore, bonded to a particular landscape.

Frazer then, as a very young child, was familiar with a number of works in the Scottish topographical-folklore tradition, but, more than anything else, he was familiar with the works of Scott. Frazer's "Memories of my Parents" points out that Scott was a favourite author not just with Daniel Frazer, but also with his son, who later wrote about Daniel's library,

> Among his books was, I think, a complete set of Sir Walter Scott's works, including what is called the author's favourite edition of the Waverley Novels. When the first popular edition of the Waverley Novels was published in the sixties of the last century my father presented the volumes to me as they appeared, and I read them from first to last with keen enjoyment.[6]

The edition of Scott which Frazer's father possessed (and which seems to have passed into Frazer's own library) was the Magnum Opus edition, with its full, antiquarian footnotes.[7] To have read right through the

Waverley novels when in one's late 'teens is an achievement that was no doubt much more common in mid-nineteenth-century Scotland than it is today, and Frazer was a bookish boy. For him the particular attractions of Scott must have been several. First, Scott was a writer dealing with Frazer's own country, with a topography which Frazer loved and with places which he knew. When Frazer first matriculated as a student at Glasgow University, it was, he remembered, still on its original site, next to the "recreation ground, which Scott has immortalised by making it the scene of the famous duel in *Rob Roy*".[8] *Rob Roy* seems to have impressed Frazer, who once described Samson as "a doughty highlander and borderer, a sort of Hebrew Rob Roy, whose choleric temper, dauntless courage, and prodigious bodily strength marked him out as the champion of Israel in many a wild foray across the border into the rich lowlands of Philistia."[9] Thinking about *Rob Roy* suggests another, important reason for Frazer's liking for Scott. *Rob Roy*, like many of Scott's novels, juxtaposes primitive and civilised societies, examining connections between them. Like *Waverley*, *Rob Roy* passes its young "standard English" hero through a series of different societies and landscapes. The Highland clans and their chiefs are regarded by most of the Englishmen in the book as "artful savages" (Ch. 32) with their "savage, uncouth, yet martial figures" (Ch. 31). The Scottish Lowlanders see them as having violent customs "that nae civilised body kens or cares onything about" (Ch. 26). One of the great preoccupations of Scott's fiction is at once to play up and to explain this apparently "savage" otherness of the Highlands, setting that "primitive" society against the developed commercial one with which readers were more familiar. To travel geographically in Scott's work is frequently to travel in time, back to a more primitive way of life. His aligning of different societies, implicitly inviting the reader to compare and evaluate them, is a comparative method, not in the specifically anthropological sense in which Frazer uses the term, but in a more general sense. It is not hard to see why Scott's work appealed to several future anthropologists. Sometimes, as in *Waverley*, the supposed links between Highlanders and dark-skinned "savages" are made even more explicit. The clans are "tribes" (Ch. 24) and their warlike appearance brings "to the south-country Lowlanders as much surprise as if an invasion of African Negroes or Esquimaux Indians had issued forth from the northern mountains of their own native country" (Ch. 44).

At the same time, Scott loved to present those mountains, and landscape set-pieces in general. As Francis Osbaldistone and Bailie Nicol Jarvie journey from Glasgow into the Highlands, in *Rob Roy*,

> On the right, amid a profusion of thickets, knolls, and crags, lay the bed of a broad mountain lake, lightly curled into tiny waves by the breath of the morning breeze, each glittering in its course under the influence of the sunbeams. High hills, rocks, and banks, waving with natural forests of birch and oak, formed the borders of this enchanting sheet of water; and, as their leaves rustled to the wind and twinkled in the sun, gave to the depth of solitude a sort of life and vivacity. (Ch. 30)

This is the sort of landscape, and landscape description, that Frazer loved for his set-pieces:

> The lake of Nemi is still as of old embowered in woods, where in spring the wild flowers blow as fresh as no doubt they did two thousand springs ago. It lies so deep down in the old crater that the calm surface of its clear water is seldom ruffled by the wind. On all sides but one the banks, thickly mantled with luxuriant vegetation, descend steeply to the water's edge.[10]

When Frazer wrote his famous description of the lake of Nemi for the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*, he had not yet visited the site. He was not to do so until 1901, after the Second Edition. The details which he added in consequence are for the most part minor and technical. They scarcely alter the nature of the landscape presented.[11] The craggy mountains, the solitary lakes, the waterfalls and the sunsets over imposing hills, as well as the desolate expanses that fill Frazer's texts, are all developments of the Scottscape he knew from childhood both from his reading and from the historically rich landscape around Helensburgh – sites such as Dumbarton Castle, which Frazer remembered for its "natural strength and picturesque grandeur, rising as it does in sheer precipices from a dead flat."[12]

We are told that one of Frazer's favourite passages from his own work was the account of the Witch of Endor which appears in *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*.[13] It seems appropriate that the reader of Scott's *Letters on Witchcraft and Demonology* should have been attracted by this account of a journey over a desolate mountain track to visit the cottage of a mysterious woman in the north. Frazer himself loved mountains, whether writing about them and the "glens" of Greece, or walking in them, as he did when he returned to Scotland, most notably in 1884, ten years after he had graduated from Glasgow, when he made a walking-tour with his closest friend, William Robertson Smith, himself

deeply attracted to the landscape sanctified by Scott. As Frazer enthusiastically recalled in 1897, writing of this walking-tour with his fellow Scot,

> He loved the mountains, and one of my most vivid recollections of him is his sitting on a hillside looking over the mountains and chanting or rather crooning some of the Hebrew psalms in a sort of rapt ecstatic way. I did not understand them, but I suppose they were some of the verses in which the psalmist speaks of lifting up his eyes to the hills. He liked the absolutely bare mountains, with nothing on them but the grass and the heather, better than wooded mountains, which I was then inclined to prefer. We made an expedition in a boat down the loch and spent a night in a shepherd's cottage. He remarked what a noble life a shepherd's is. I think he meant that the shepherd lives so much with nature, away from the squalor and vice of cities, and has to endure much hardship in caring for his flock. After returning from our long rambles on the hills we used to have tea (and an exceedingly comfortable tea) at the little inn and then we read light literature (I read French novels, I forget what he read), stretched at ease one of us on the sofa, the other in an easy chair. These were amongst the happiest days I ever spent.[14]

This side of Robertson Smith reinforced in Frazer the combination of elements which had impressed him so strongly in John Veitch, his professor of Moral Philosophy and Rhetoric at Glasgow University.

At Glasgow Frazer had taken two classes whch involved the use of literary texts written in English. He studied English Literature with John Nichol in 1872–3, in the same large class as William Sharp, who would become famous as Fiona MacLeod, the Celtic Twilight novelist. The class seems to have concentrated on the literature of the English Renaissance, but also to have studied some American literature. Nichol was the pioneer of the teaching of American literature in Britain, and is best remembered for his championing of Fenimore Cooper, the "American Scott", whose writings about "savage" behaviour might have appealed to Frazer. Yet Frazer does not record being impressed by the rather smoothly sophisticated Nichol. Rather, he paid tribute to the literary enthusiasm of John Veitch, who taught aspects of literature as a feature of his rhetoric course and was part of a tradition of university teachers of English-language rhetoric whose roots stretch back to the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* given by Adam Smith at Glasgow University in 1751.[15] Veitch's own philosophy may have been outdated, but that did not worry Frazer, who proudly linked him to Hutcheson, Dugald Stewart

and Sir William Hamilton. Frazer's library contained Veitch's 1869 memoir of Hamilton. What most impressed Frazer, though, was that Veitch

> was a man of true poetical feeling, and I well remember the quiet but deep enthusiasm with which he recited verses of Wordsworth and of the fine old Scottish ballad "Sir Patrick Spens". His teaching made on my mind a profound impression which has never been worn out. It opened up an intellectual vista of which I had never dreamed before, and which has never since been wholly closed or obscured by later and very different studies.[16]

Frazer's love of the Scottish ballads must have been encouraged by Veitch, and is clear, for instance, from the notes to the anthropologist's *Passages of the Bible* where sections from Judges are compared with a stanza from "Sir Patrick Spens" and with Scott's ballad "Lord Soulis". Veitch's great love was expressed in the title of his 1878 book *The History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*. Frazer's father presented his son with a copy in 1878 which is now in Trinity College Library. Veitch's book blends the literary and the antiquarian. A friend, writing of Veitch's love of "solitary wanderings amongst the hills" wrote of how Veitch "certainly did much to re-create, and re-vivify the interest which Sir Walter [Scott] started". The academic year in which Veitch's course so impressed Frazer was 1871–2 – during the period in which Veitch's following in Scott's footsteps was at its most intense.[17] Both Frazer and Veitch were minor poets. Veitch's *Hillside Rhymes* were published in 1872, and Frazer owned Veitch's book of poems *The Tweed* (1875). However, Veitch's main work, like Frazer's, was done in a prose that was romantically tinged.

Frazer took his topographical Romanticism with him as part of his Scottish upbringing. He had grown up, after all, in what he called "the beautiful natural surroundings of Helensburgh, situated at the mouth of the lovely Gareloch and looking across its calm water to the wooded peninsula of Roseneath."[18] After childhood reading in McLure Thomson, Wilson, Pollok and Scott, he had been inspired by the literary personality of John Veitch, as he would be by the similarly oriented Robertson Smith. One of Frazer's poems, "June in Cambridge", suggests that his massive and laborious studies took the place of the Scottish environment he had known.

I shall not feel the breezes,
   I may not smell the sea
That breaks to-day in Scotland
   On shores how dear to me!

. . .

Still, still I con old pages
   And through great volumes wade,
While life's brief summer passes,
   And youth's brief roses fade.

Ah yes! Through these dull pages
   A glimmering vista opes,
Where fairer flowers are blowing
   Than bloom on earthly slopes.

The dreamland world of fancy!
   There is my own true home,
There are the purple mountains
   And blue seas fringed with foam.[19]

The poem is conventional enough, but valuable since it draws attention to the way in which study and scholarship were for Frazer imaginative activities, and deeply Romantic ones at that. The paper landscape of Frazer's imaginative prose grows out of the Scottish Romantic topographical tradition rooted in Scott's work, which he had known and loved since boyhood.

Frazer's prose, though, is not uniform. It tends to oscillate between purplish landscape descriptions and factual card-indexing. Here again the connection with Scott is strong if we remember the Scott of the lengthy antiquarian and folkloric footnotes, and the Scott who not only mythologised landscape but also juxtaposed cultures. Scott was fascinated (though he could also smile at) obsessive scholarly collecting, as we can see from *The Antiquary*. His interest in such collecting and in viewing different cultures in a comparative perspective sprang from the Scottish Enlightenment. As an Edinburgh lawyer, Scott moved in the milieu where that culture remained strongest. His elaborate introductions and passion for recording fact and folklore as well as fiction also have their counterpart in Frazer.

To the biographical and stylistic reasons for viewing Frazer in relation

to Scott may be added those of cultural genealogy. The importance of the major nineteenth-century Scottish anthropologists in the development of international anthropological theory has been indicated by Ackerman and by George Stocking in his authoritative and widely praised study *Victorian Anthropology*.[20] Here I am concerned simply to emphasise how the links between these writers form a chain that connects the intellectual and imaginative world of the Scottish Enlightenment and of Scott with the intellectual climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Andrew Lang, himself an editor of Scott and a fiction-writer brought up on Sir Walter's work, was anxious to claim Scott as a forerunner in the field of comparative mythology.[21] Frazer did not do this directly, but he acknowledged and made much of Robertson Smith as his own mentor, Robertson Smith being the man who had commissioned Frazer to write on totemism for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, that great legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment. Smith edited the *Britannica*'s ninth edition with a fellow Scot, Spencer Baynes, Professor of Logic and English Literature at St Andrews, who (like John Veitch) had been a pupil of Sir William Hamilton. Robertson Smith himself had been a good friend of John Ferguson M'Lennan when they were both in Edinburgh. M'Lennan, whose work Frazer described as "epoch-making"[22] and who has been called the father of modern anthropology,[23] is a vital link in the distinguished tradition of nineteenth-century Scottish anthropology, and points us back towards the Scottish Enlightenment milieu which produced Scott. Many links connect these writers. M'Lennan and Robertson Smith were near-lifelong friends. M'Lennan, Robertson Smith and Frazer all passed through Trinity, Cambridge, after studying in Scottish universities. Frazer points out that the influence of M'Lennan on Robertson Smith "was deep and lasting", a view confirmed by Stocking.[24] Like Scott and Frazer, M'Lennan had taken a law degree. Like Robertson Smith and Frazer, M'Lennan's literary career involved working for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. His major work, *Primitive Marriage*, ends with a homage to the philosophical world of Dugald Stewart. M'Lennan had grown up in Inverness-shire and later unpleasantly recalled his childhood environment surrounded by folk who lived one family to a room in houses with rough clay floors and unevenly thatched roofs, whose lives were filled with the violence and cruelty of "untutored savages".[25] We are back, with a vengeance, in the Highlands of *Rob Roy*.

What all this means is that, when Robertson Smith introduced the young Glaswegian J. G. Frazer to another Scotsman, William Wright, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, as "one of the Scotch contingent"[26]

this phrase should alert us to a cultural and intellectual genealogy in which Frazer plays a crucial part. The tradition of Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and other Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, a tradition involving much examination of the civil and the barbarous, was a tradition inherited by Scott, whose own work as an omnivorous collector and writer added great impetus to the development of folklore and anthropology in Scotland and beyond. This tradition was inherited by M'Lennan, his disciple Robertson Smith, and (eventually) by J. G. Frazer, who had been reading his way through the Waverley novels as a child.

Robert Ackerman draws attention[27] to the Preface to the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* as the piece of writing which, perhaps more than any other, reveals Frazer the man. I think Ackerman is right here, but would like to draw particular attention to the concluding words of this preface. Frazer has revealed himself as divided between the beauty of religious traditions and the violence he feels he must do to them in order to further his scientific work. The revelation of the truth in this anti-holy war with its great field-guns is all that matters: "Whatever comes of it, wherever it leads us, we must follow truth alone. It is our only guiding star: *hoc signo vinces*." This passage is indeed a daring use of a Christian text against Christianity, another example of Frazer's familiar technique of tactfully undermining Christian foundations. But, particularly after this resounding declaration, the paragraph that follows is a remarkable one.

> To a passage in my book it has been objected by a distinguished scholar that the church-bells of Rome cannot be heard, even in the stillest weather, on the shores of the Lake of Nemi. In acknowledging my blunder and leaving it uncorrected, may I plead in extenuation of my obduracy the example of an illustrious writer? In *Old Mortality* we read how a hunted Covenanter, fleeing before Claverhouse's dragoons, hears the sullen boom of the kettledrums of the pursuing cavalry borne to him on the night wind. When Scott was taken to task for this description, because the drums are not beaten by cavalry at night, he replied in effect that he liked to hear the drums sounding there, and that he would let them sound on so long as his book might last. In the same spirit I make bold to say that by the Lake of Nemi I love to hear, if it be only in imagination, the distant chiming of the bells of Rome, and I would fain believe that their airy music may ring in the ears of my readers after it has ceased to vibrate in my own.[28]

After declaring that "we must follow truth alone", Frazer seems to be

making a *volte-face*, or at least to be suggesting that there is a "poetic" truth that should be allowed to prevail over prosaic, literal truth. He leaves us with his own work aligned beside that of Scott. He leaves us less with *The Golden Bough* as science than with *The Golden Bough* as literature. This impulse becomes clearer in the Preface to the Third Edition, where Frazer expresses the hope that, in expanding his book, he has been able, without "sacrificing the solid substances of a scientific treatise", to cast his "materials into a more artistic mould and so perhaps attract readers, who might have been repelled by a more strictly logical and systematic arrangement of the facts". Frazer presents the "mysterious" happening among "picturesque natural surroundings".[29] The stress on facts remains, as it does in the elaborate apparatus that accompanies Scott's fictions and anthological work, but more and more attention is being paid to the *literary* presentation of the data.

Frazer's reference to Scott in the conclusion of the Preface to the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* seems to me a crucial point of reference. The novel mentioned, *Old Mortality*, takes us back to Frazer's childhood reading of Pollok's *Tales of the Covenanters*, and then to Scott himself. *Old Mortality* is relevant too, because it is a book about religious bigotry, superstition and its alleviation through the adoption of more enlightened views. It opens with a landscape set-piece decription of an old burial ground among the hills, and its theme of "old mortality" is very much Frazer's theme also. The particular passage which Frazer mentions occurs early in chapter 6 of Scott's novel. It clearly impressed Frazer, who mentions it again in the notes to his *Passages of the Bible* as conveying an unusually "vivid impression to ear and eye . . . of a cavalry regiment on the march by moonlight".[30] Yet surely the modern reader is not struck by this as one of the most arresting passages in Scott. It describes how Henry Morton

> did not think it necessary to take a light, being perfectly acquainted with every turn of the road; and it was lucky he did not do so, for he had hardly stepped beyond the threshold ere a heavy trampling of horses announced, that the body of cavalry whose kettle-drums they had before heard, were in the act of passing along the high-road which winds round the foot of the bank on which the house of Milnwood was placed. He heard the commanding officer distinctly give the word *halt*. A pause of silence followed, interrupted only by the occasional neighing or pawing of an impatient charger.

Aesthetically, this passage pleased Frazer, yet its real significance for him

becomes clear only when we relate it to Scott's footnote and to the passage where Frazer ties it to the bells at Nemi. Scott's footnote reads,

> Regimental music is never played at night. But who can assure us that such was not the custom in Charles the Second's time? Till I am well informed on this point, the kettle-drums shall clash on, as adding something to the picturesque effect of the night march.

In summarising Scott, Frazer subtly shifts the emphasis as to what the note says. Scott implies, at least, that, if he receives precise factual information and is eventually "well informed on this point", he may alter the passage. The struggle here is between Scott and novelist and Scott the antiquarian collector of precise and curious facts. The novelist is allowed to win, but the hint is that the fact-lover *may* eventually prevail. Frazer presents Scott as saying that because "he liked to hear the drums sounding there . . . he would let them sound on so long as his book might last" – a rather more confident and determinedly novelistic statement than the one Scott made. Frazer centres on this obscure point not because it is obscure but because it puts in a nutshell the constant and contrary pulls in his own work between factual recording and tabulation on the one hand, and creative writing on the other. What is particularly interesting is that where Scott the novelist teasingly suggests that the antiquarian may eventually prevail, Frazer the scholar comes down here on the side of true fiction against mere fact.

Stanley Edgar Hyman whose 1962 book *The Tangled Bank* is the only study to consider Frazer extensively as an imaginative writer, thinks that the basic form of *The Golden Bough* is the travelogue, with a strong presence also of the tragic genre. Hyman makes no connection with Scott, but the travelogue is a favourite narrative device of Scott's, and often a gloom hangs over his text that comes from the realisation that the innumerable picturesque customs and traditions of an earlier world are being lost, tragically destroyed by the modern ethos. This emotion is complicated by the fact that, however much he may lament the destruction of the fascinating old ways and however much he may memorialise them, Scott, like Frazer, is part of the newer world which is hastening that destruction. Travelogue and tragedy are certainly important to both Frazer and Scott, but I would like to suggest that the experience of reading Frazer's texts, especially *The Golden Bough*, calls for a different form of definition, one that does not put the text in the genre of fiction, but does place it in a meaningful relation to fiction, and again highlights the connections between the author of *The Golden Bough* and the author

of the Waverley novels.

The term I would like to use is Frazer's own. It comes from his essays on the Australian anthropologists whom he had befriended and whose work had contributed a good deal to his own endeavours. Frazer's essay on Fison and Howitt is interesting for various reasons. Firstly, he points out how childhood imaginative reading in Spenser and Bunyan had an impact on Fison's future development. Secondly, he stresses the importance of the use of the imagination in considering anthropological material – particularly for "all who view savages through a telescope, whether from a club or a college window". Frazer contends that, "If we are really intent on knowing the truth", then

> by long and patient effort we may come to see in the magic mirror of the mind a true reflection of a life which differs immeasurably from our own. Yet this reflection or picture must itself be pieced together by the imagination; for imagination, the power of inward vision, is as necessary to science as to poetry, whether our aim is to understand our fellowmen, to unravel the tangled skein of matter, or to explore the starry depths of space.[31]

Though he warns that imagination has its hazards for the anthropologist, Frazer clearly states the importance of the imaginative, quasi-poetic vision for the anthropological writer. Again, he is obviously attracted to conventionally "poetical" landscape passages in the writings of Howitt and Fison – set-pieces very similar to those in his work.

It is such landscape descriptions which fire Frazer's enthusiasm for Baldwin Spencer's *Wanderings in Wild Australia*. That book *is* a kind of travelogue, but it is also, for Frazer, something more:

> In the directness and simplicity of its style, in the impression which it leaves of truth to nature, in the fascination of its descriptions of strange folk and ever shifting scenery, *Wanderings in Wild Australia* may be compared to the *Odyssey*. If the writer did not tread enchanted ground, at least he moved among people who firmly believed in the power of enchantment and constantly resorted to it for the satisfaction of their wants and the confusion of their foes; if he did not encounter monsters like the Cyclopes or Scylla and Charybdis, at least he beheld with his own eyes the rocky pool in which the dreadful dragon, the Wollunqua, was believed to lurk, ready to dart out and devour its human victims. All this serves to invest the story of Spencer's

> wanderings in Australia with an atmosphere of romance, and to lend it the character of an anthropological epic.[32]

"Anthropological epic" seems to me a term particularly fitted to describe *The Golden Bough* as well as Frazer's conception of the Bible. Perhaps the travelogue is strongest in the 1890 edition, but as the text develops we move towards something else. *The Golden Bough* seems to become much less one work than a series of related volumes, panoramic in their scope, crammed with cultural juxtapositions, the "romance" of landscape, and obsessively collected data – an "anthropological epic". All these features are common to both Frazer's work and to the Waverley novels. For, if Scott in *Waverley* set out to write romance, then in the related but independent series of novels taken as a whole, he ended up writing an epic much wider in its scope than Ossian's. I am not suggesting that Frazer was writing continually in conscious imitation of Scott. Scott's impact was more subtle than that; consciously Frazer tended to align himself with English eighteenth-century writers, and critics have followed him in this, linking him specially with Gibbon. In retrospect, though, it makes best sense to align the full *Golden Bough* with the Waverley novels, particularly in view of Frazer's almost lifelong familiarity with them, not to mention his cultural and intellectual descent from Scott's milieu. Scott is a strong part of that "romanticism" in Frazer which, Ackerman writes, "went underground in the work of the mature man, but never totally disappeared".[33] In those landscape set-pieces, particularly, that romanticism moulds the surface of Frazer's prose. In other ways too, the workaholic Scott and the more eclectically fact-loving of the Romantic writers should be placed beside Frazer, and their works aligned to show that it was not only Andrew Lang, later editor of Scott's expanded Magnum Opus edition, but also J. G. Frazer who was one of the descendants of Scott in the tradition of Scottish writing.

Seeing Frazer as a descendant of Scott entails a restructuring of the nineteenth-century literary map, and prompts the alignment of Frazer beside another exiled Scottish writer much more conventionally seen as inheriting many of Scott's concerns: Robert Louis Stevenson. I am not suggesting that Stevenson influenced Frazer, but wish to indicate points of contact between them that help to show why the two should be considered as complementary members of a Scottish cultural tradition. Stevenson was born four years before Frazer. Both men left Scotland at very nearly the same time. Stevenson's adventurous life was very different from that of the Fellow of Trinity, but, if we take his work as a whole, connections may become clearer. For Stevenson wrote not only romances

of the Scottish mountains such as *Kidnapped* and *The Black Arrow*, he also wrote about primitive life in the South Seas, novellas like *The Beach of Falesá* and *The Ebb-Tide* revealing a concern with the coming-together of Western and Pacific man – of so-called "civilised" and "savage". Often connections between the two are ironically related. A concern with the animalistic primitive and the civilised modern is what underlies *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Stevenson was also a folklore-collector, an aspect of his work which has only recently received much study, and he was interested in cultural juxtapositions.[34] Frazer and Stevenson never met; in anthropology, Stevenson's great friend was Andrew Lang. But Frazer was a keen reader of Stevenson, particularly in the late 1880s, when he was working on the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*. The 1907 catalogue of Frazer's library includes nine titles by Stevenson, including *Kidnapped*, *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Memories and Portraits* in first editions. Two more books are present in the 1935–6 catalogue. Though Frazer and Stevenson never corresponded, there are other strong links between them. Stevenson's *Vailima Letters* are addressed to one of his closest friends, Sidney Colvin, later his editor. Colvin was a Fellow of Trinity and advised Frazer in 1884 about his Pausanias. A much closer connection is the doctoral thesis which Frazer's stepdaughter, Lilly M. Grove, wrote at the University of Paris and published in 1908 as *Robert Louis Stevenson, sa vie et son oeuvre, étudée surtout dans les romans écossais*. In discussing Stevenson, Lilly Grove discusses a man whose family background and early literary orientations were remarkably similar to those of her own stepfather. Stevenson's father, she writes, was a reserved man, but much loved and respected by his family. He was a staunch Calvinist who brought up his son on the Bible and stories of the Covenanters. Grove discusses Stevenson's great debt to Scott and the way in which he was able to convey such a powerful sense of landscape. But most striking is her quotation of a long passage from Stevenson's "Genesis of *The Master of Ballantrae*", in which Stevenson describes the workings of his imagination as the idea for that novel came to him when he was living in the Adirondack Mountains. This is part of the passage quoted by Grove (pp. 95–6 in her published thesis; she urges us to compare it with the text of a letter Stevenson sent to Sidney Colvin on Christmas Eve 1887):

> Come, said I to my engine, let us make a tale, a story of many years and countries, of the sea and the land, savagery and civilisation. . . . There cropped up in my memory a singular case of a buried and resuscitated fakir, which I had often been told by an uncle of mine. . . .

> On such a fine frosty night, with no wind and the thermometer below zero, the brain works with much vivacity; and the next moment I had seen the circumstance transplanted from India and the tropics to the Adirondack wilderness and the stringent cold of the Canadian border. . . . And while I was groping for the fable and the character required, behold I found them lying ready and nine years old in my memory. . . . A story conceived in Highland rain, in the blend of the smell of Athole correspondence and the Memoirs of the Chevalier de Johnstone . . . .[35]

This passage, with its description of a mind and imagination that flits across and links cultures and landscapes, "savagery and civilisation", that pieces together old documents and that transplants the story of a resurrected man, seems to provide a powerful analogy to the way Frazer's mind worked, to demonstrate that we should see Stevenson, one of the descendants of Scott in the Scottish Romantic novel, and Frazer, one of the descendants of Scott in the Scottish tradition of anthropological assemblage – or even epic – as connected parts of one cultural tradition whose roots stretch back into the Scottish Enlightenment, but whose work also points forward towards modernism.

Both Frazer and Stevenson can be accused of an inhibiting nostalgia. Frazer, no doubt, suffers from a philosophical nostalgia for Enlightenment Edinburgh and Glasgow, a nostalgia fostered by his decisive contact, as a Glasgow student, with the Hamiltonian John Veitch. At Glasgow Frazer studied with Lord Kelvin in 1872–3, yet later he could not accept Einstein; in 1873–4 he studied with Edward Caird, yet he could never accept Hegel or much of modern philosophy. Ernest Gellner has written that Frazer "adapted the philosophy of David Hume to the great new tidal wave of ethnographic evidence about human unreason".[36] Frazer's nostalgia for Scottish philosophy corresponds to Stevenson's nostalgia for Scottish history, so many of his tales being set in the world of eighteenth-century Scotland. Yet in both writers there is also a deep personal and familial nostalgia, sharpened by exile. If Frazer's "June in Cambridge" suggests that scholarship by the Cam could replace and reinstate his delight in the Scottish landscape, then Stevenson in the South Seas used literature for the same purpose, returning with powerful nostalgia to the world he had left in poems such as "To S[idney] C[olvin]" and the 1887 poem which opens,

> The tropics vanish, and meseems that I,
> From Halkerside, from topmost Allermuir,
> Or steep Caerketton, dreaming gaze again.

Stevenson's writing about his own ancestors in *Memories and Portraits* should be set beside Frazer's "Memories of my Parents" and his 1932 "Speech on Receiving the Freedom of the City of Glasgow" – an honour which, Ackerman contends, was especially dear to Frazer.[37] When Frazer remembers the scenes of his childhood, his memories are vivid and nostalgia-laden, as when he describes the Helensburgh he grew up in, looking across the loch westward to "the wooded peninsula of Roseneath" and "the low green hills of Gareloch in the further distance, and the rugged mountains of Loch Long rising above them on the western horizon". Here in Helensburgh, looking out to the mountains, Frazer spent much of his childhood in a house called Glenlee.

> In the very heart of this town of gardens stands Glenlee. It is a little house with a veranda facing full south about which hops used to twine, and a sloping bank on which fuchsias with their red and purple blossoms used to grow. A burn winds through the garden, flowing for a part of its course over a pebbly bed at the foot of red sandstone cliffs.[38]

The house and garden are there today, much as Frazer described them, though the word "cliffs" seems an exaggeration. What is most striking when one stands in that garden and thinks of Frazer is the great exposed bell tower of the former United Presbyterian Church which looms over the grove where Frazer played. This church building was erected in July 1861, so it was there when Frazer lived in Glenlee. Close by stands another church, Park Church, opened in 1863.[39] Helensburgh is a town of churches and bells, as well as of gardens and groves. Of his childhood there Frazer recalled how "I look back to those peaceful Sabbath days with something like fond regret, and the sound of Sabbath bells, even in a foreign land, still touches a deep chord in my heart".[40] The bells Frazer heard from Glenlee by the Firth of Clyde in childhood underlie, I suspect, that curious determination (for which he sought precedence in Scott) to hear the church bells of Rome by the lake of Nemi. Ackerman points out that Frazer names "Renan as the source of the image of the 'eternal bells of Rome', whose tolling symbolizes the persistence of the religious impulse in mankind, with which *The Golden Bough* ends".[41] But, long before he read Renan, the tolling of church bells had made a

deep personal impression on Frazer, being intimately linked not with Rome but with that world of Presbyterian Scotland which did so much to form him; R. A. Downie even records that Frazer regularly attended church for most of his life, despite that apparent rejection of his earlier faith which Ackerman emphasises.[42] The bells of Helensburgh underlay the bells of Renan, just as the mountain scenery of the Firth of Clyde prepared Frazer for his reading of Scott. So much of Frazer's later interests and career seems to have roots that reach right back into his childhood. Downie's *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"* (1970) – which, unlike his earlier tribute of 1940, was written without Lady Frazer's supervision – records of Frazer that "An early nursemaid was responsible for his only encounter with a member of a primitive tribe, for she took him to a fairground where 'The Wild Man of Borneo', dashing from his tent, set young Frazer howling with terror."[43]

Frazer, like Stevenson, looks backwards. But Frazer, like Stevenson, also points forwards. Aspects of Stevenson look towards Conrad or MacDiarmid and have appealed to a variety of modernist or post-modernist writers, from T. S. Eliot to Borges and Alasdair Gray. Frazer's own impact on modernist writing is most fully documented in John B. Vickery's 1973 study *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"*. Other writers, in works on particular authors, have developed more specialised connections, and a volume entitled *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*, is likely to further an appreciation of the substantial effect that Frazer has had on modern writing. The more time that passes, the more it appears that Frazer is coming to be valued not merely as an anthropological writer, but as one who became bound up with the course of what we vaguely designate "English literature". What should not be lost sight of is that, like Stevenson, Frazer has an important place in the Scottish eclectic tradition of which Scott too was a part, and whose roots lie in the Scottish Enlightenment. A Janus-figure, Frazer is crucial to the connections between the Scottish tradition and international modernism. His cultural assemblages, his juxtapositions of civilised and savage, and his curious combination of conscious literary style and factual encyclopaedic scope all look towards the work of the major modernist writers, including Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Lawrence and Conrad. Yet these features also relate to the author of the Waverley novels. In cultural and literary history Frazer has a particular importance that so far has gone unrealised because he has not been seen in terms of the Scottish tradition to which he belongs. In rewriting literary history, we have to become aware that along with Lang and Stevenson, Frazer is a "missing link" between Scott and modernism.

NOTES

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1. Sir James Frazer and Lady Frazer, *Pasha the Pom, the Story of a Little Dog* (London: Blackie, 1937), pp. 10, 5, 11.
2. Ackerman, esp. pp. 46–7. See also Robert Alun Jones, "Robertson Smith and James Frazer on Religion", in George W. Stocking, Jr (ed.), *Functionalism Historicized: Essays on British Social Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 31–58.
3. R. Angus Downie, *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), p. 21.
4. J. G. Frazer, "Memories of my Parents", *Creation and Evolution in Primitive Cosmogonies and Other Pieces* (London: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 132–3; John Bunyan, *The Holy War*, ed. Roger Sharrock and James F. Forrest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 9.
5. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 134.
6. Ibid.
7. Information about Frazer's library comes from the catalogues among his papers in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. I am very grateful to Miss Alice Wales of Glasgow University Library for providing this information.
8. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 121.
9. J. G. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1918), II, 481.
10. *GB3*, I, 2.
11. I am grateful to Robert Fraser for this information.
12. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 137.
13. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, II, 520; Sarah Campion, "Autumn of an Anthropologist", *New Statesman and Nation*, 13 January 1951, p. 36.
14. Quoted in Ackerman, p. 60.
15. Information about Frazer's Glasgow courses comes from the class calendars and catalogues in Glasgow University Archives; I am grateful to Michael Moss, Archivist, for assistance. See also Philip Hobsbaum, "A Guid Chepe Mercat of Languages: The Origins of English Teaching at Glasgow University", *The College Courant, Journal of the Glasgow University Graduates Association*, no. 21 (September 1983), 10–17.
16. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 123.
17. William Knight, *Some Nineteenth Century Scotsmen* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1908), pp. 255 and 259.
18. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 129.
19. J. G. Frazer, *The Gorgon's Head and Other Literary Pieces* (London: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 439–40.
20. George W. Stocking, Jr, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987).
21. See Robert Crawford, "Pater's *Renaissance*, Andrew Lang, and Anthropological Romanticism", *ELH*, Winter 1986, pp. 849–79.
22. See Ackerman, p. 322 n. 24.
23. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, pp. 297–8.

24. Frazer, *The Gorgon's Head*, p. 284; Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 267.
25. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 164.
26. Ackerman, p. 60.
27. Ibid., p. 164.
28. *GB 3*, I, xxvi–xxvii.
29. *GB 3*, I, viii.
30. J. G. Frazer, *Passages of the Bible Chosen for their Literary Beauty and Interest* (London: A. & C. Black, 1895), p. 429.
31. Frazer, *The Gorgon's Head*, pp. 301–2.
32. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, pp. 68–9.
33. Ackerman, p. 9.
34. Robert I. Hillier, "Folklore and Oral Tradition in Stevenson's South Seas Narrative Poems and Short Stories", *Scottish Literary Journal*, November 1987, pp. 32–47.
35. "Genesis of *The Master of Ballantrae*", *Skerryvore Edition of the Complete Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Heinemann, 1924), IX, xxv–xxvii.
36. Ernest Gellner, "Leaves from the Golden Bough", review of Ackerman in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 15 January 1988, p. 18.
37. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, pp. 117–28; Ackerman, p. 5.
38. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 150.
39. *Helensburg United Presbyterian Church Jubilee, 1894* (Helensburgh: J. Lindsay Laidlaw, n.d.), p. 38; George R. Logan, *Park Church Helensburgh, The First Hundred Years* (Glasgow: R. Thomson, 1964), p. 3.
40. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 133.
41. Ackerman, p. 93.
42. Downie, *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"*, p. 21.
43. Ibid., p. 18.

III

SPEAKING FOR THE OTHERS: RELATIVISM AND AUTHORITY IN VICTORIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Gillian Beer

WHEN the Frazer lectureship was founded in 1921 A. E. Housman composed an address to Sir James Frazer in which he compared *The Golden Bough* to a banyan – instead of a single magical branch of parasitic mistletoe it is an exotic tree whose branches drop down new roots.[1] Housman deliberately blends the branch and the book in his eulogy:

> The Golden Bough, compared by Virgil to the mistletoe but now revealing some affinity to the banyan, has not only waxed a great tree but has spread to a spacious hospitable forest, whose king receives homage in many tongues from a multitude resorting thither for its fruits or timber or refreshing shade.[2]

This is a jest about the branching growth of the book itself through its successive editions as well as a graceful compliment to the spread of Frazer's reputation.

Yet Frazer's book, though "wide-waving, many-toned", was no self-generating "life-tree Igdrasil".[3] The unpruned forest of the work had spread out its roots and branches not from a seed but a slip – in the horticultural sense of a twig or shoot for grafting. There were trees in the Victorian intellectual forest before Frazer; some of them expanded prodigiously like his: James Prichard's *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* grew from one volume in 1813, to two in 1836, and became five by 1847.[4] And there were woods too: totalising systems such as Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*, Indo-Germanic and Aryan language theories, Darwin's natural selection, Tylor's fetishism, and, most influentially among Frazer's immediate forerunners, solar mythology, which, in Max Müller's work, referred all interpretations of myth to phenomena of weather and the rising and

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

setting sun.[5] Frazer responded to many of these ideas and systems; but he sought a fresh general explanation that would justify the cross-reading of myths from groups widely separated in time and space and that would stabilise an underlying common significance.

In the first paragraph of the Preface to the First Edition of *The Golden Bough* Frazer combines the matter-of-fact and the arcane, moves between the local and the general, the seasonal and the continuous, to explain – and then to mystify – the work's beginning:

> For some time I have been preparing a general work on primitive superstition and religion. Among the problems which had attracted my attention was the hitherto unexplained rule of the Arician priesthood; and last spring it happened that in the course of my reading I came across some facts, which, combined with others I had noted before, suggested an explanation of the rule in question. As the explanation, if correct, promised to throw light on some obscure features of primitive religion, I resolved to develop it fully, and, detaching it from my general work, to issue it as a separate study. This book is the result.[6]

The paragraph is marked by caution and expansiveness, a *pars pro toto* enigma. In Frazer's account a ritualistic magic of procedure (the spring, the course, the happening, the associative motion) combines with the rational (throwing light on the obscure, detaching the specific problem from the general). Together, these imaginative modes produce not a monograph but a work that reaches out endlessly in an effort to exceed its own confines and meet the range of its material.

At the same time, this is a work committed to totalising explanation, to the discovery of a single system of reference and meaning, such as had already been developed by Darwin in evolutionary terms and in terms of solar myth by Max Müller, and that was being developed, in terms of the unconscious and parent–child dynamics, by Freud, alongside Frazer. Though trained as a classicist, Frazer wrote in *The Gorgon's Head* (1927) that he went to William Thomson's (Lord Kelvin's) lectures at Edinburgh and carried away from Thomson's accounts of thermodynamics "a conception of the physical universe as regulated by exact and absolutely unvarying laws of Nature".[7]

The search for parallel mental laws typifies much major Victorian intellectual activity. So Thomas Bendysshe in his 1864 "History of Anthropology" defined the field of anthropology as "The Science of Man . . . that science which deals with all phenomena exhibited by collective

man, and by him alone, which are capable of being reduced to law."[8] Not for nothing did George Eliot in *Middlemarch* emphasise, and seek to resist, the obsessional seeking after single explanatory systems, conceived as origins, beneath diversity and abundance. That search controls the work of both Casaubon and Lydgate, the one a mythographer, the other a natural scientist. The book's organisation counterproposes diversity and abundance, as well as functional similarities, within the community of Middlemarch.[9]

Andrew Lang in *Magic and Religion* (1901) speaks of Frazer's as the "Covent Garden School of mythologists": "The new school of mythology does work the vegetable element in mythology hard; nearly as hard as the solar element used to be worked. . . . The vegetable school, the Covent Garden school of mythologists, mixes up real human beings with vegetation."[10] In Lang's objection there may also be heard a side-reference to the literary, non-field-work nature of Frazer's undertaking. Frazer remains in armchair control of all the diversity of natural forms he surveys upon the page; not being confronted with them materially, he can "mix up" real human beings with vegetation.

Frazer is entirely literary in his endeavour, though so much of the material he analyses comes from oral cultures. His imagination is imbued with classical and with English literature, though much of his material has been transmitted through the reports of observers writing in other European tongues. The largesse of his work, with its sweeping geographical juxtapositions, its temporal freedom, its invocation of evidence from widely separated cultures, relies upon his own magic stasis. He *needs* not to know the humdrum of field-work and its privileging of one place; he remains a reader of traveller's tales, albeit one who weighs them nicely. He respects the complexity and the strangeness of other societies even while he seeks the elements repeated in them all.

The figure of Prospero haunts the language of *The Golden Bough*, providing Frazer with a never-articulated role, as the magician whose methods are those of reason, and whose goal is to create order out of the unruly elements without denying caprice, chance and accident. Prospero is both dreamer and controller of dreams, curtailing his twin emanations, Ariel and Caliban, and at the last acknowledging death that outgoes knowledge. In the final paragraphs of *The Golden Bough* Frazer contemplates the cooling of the universe, a concept central to the theories of Thomson, whose lectures he had attended:

> In the ages to come man may be able to predict, perhaps even to control, the wayward courses of the winds and clouds, but hardly will

> his puny hands have strength to speed afresh our slackening planet in its orbit or rekindle the dying fire of the sun. Yet . . . these gloomy apprehensions, like the earth and the sun themselves, are only part of that unsubstantial world which thought has conjured up out of the void. . . . They too, like so much that to common eyes seems solid, may melt into air, into thin air.[11]

Revealingly, neither Shakespeare nor the Bible appears in the Index to the First Edition (though one should note that Frazer did not make his own index). They are simply too close to home to be categorised as topics. They permeate the work's discourse and so knit together its assumptions.

Frazer is well aware of the Faustian false promises of scientific explanation and of magic alike. With what may also be an allusion to the image of the seeker after knowledge in seventeenth-century emblem books, stumbling wearily with his stick and his dark lantern after the free and spring-like female figure of Nature, he writes that science and magic both

> lure the weary inquirer, the footsore seeker, on through the wilderness of disappointment in the present by their endless promises of the future; they take him up to the top of an exceeding high mountain and show him, beyond the dark clouds and rolling mists at his feet, a vision of the celestial city, far off, it may be, but radiant with unearthly splendour, bathed in the light of dreams.[12]

The multiple allusions, to Moses, to the temptation of Christ, to *Pilgrim's Progress*, to seventeenth-century emblem books such as Michael Maierus's *Atalanta Fugiens*, to a romantic expansion of the reader's own ordinary experience of climbing a hill, all combine to gratify.

Frazer's style is often effusive, always imbued with a shared cultural repertoire which places reader and writer together in the midst of a thronging maze of myth and at the same time at a commanding cultural height above it. His language is constantly caught up into the terms of the assumptions he seeks to analyse; so, in one of his more pithy sentences, he personifies science and magic in kinship and gender terms that reveal a habit of mind he is elsewhere describing as primitive: "The principles of association are excellent in themselves, and indeed absolutely essential to the working of the human mind. Legitimately applied they yield science; illegitimately applied they yield magic, the bastard sister of science."[13] Magic is both female and illegitimate, disturbing causality.

Frazer's comparative methods in his anthropology draw attention to similarities between the belief systems of remote peoples and rural groups in present-day Europe. His own writing everywhere manifests, though it never draws attention to, the prevalence of magical epistemologies in the culture of his intellectual England, and specifically in the culture of his kind of literary anthropology. This combination of the covert and the all-encompassing, of control and helplessness, characterises the allure of *The Golden Bough*. On the face of it, after all, it is a little surprising that we are all assembled to discuss Frazer rather than Prichard or Spencer or Lubbock or Tylor, or, particularly, Max Müller. And perhaps their turn will come. These were the figures who shaped the new field of study in the second half of the nineteenth century. The arguments among them and their contemporaries writing in the new specialist journals, as well as in magazines such as *The Nineteenth Century* and the *Contemporary Review*, formed the conditions of study and the problems of method for Frazer's work.

In *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"* John Vickery gives almost no account of the imaginative enterprise of anthropology before Frazer and so obliterates the lines of affiliation that drew Frazer into, and beyond, the debates of his time. Within the mid-Victorian period there was already an active interplay between anthropological writing and literature, even while anthropology was attempting to determine its own independence and its own limits.

Anthropology was thought of as a new science in the 1860s and not an altogether socially respectable one. George Stocking recounts the anecdote that, when Lubbock was considering becoming president of the newly formed Anthropological Society in 1867, Huxley warned him that "the title 'President of the Anthropological Society' might hinder his attempt to gain a seat in Parliament".[14] Like all novel fields of study, anthropology in the 1860s immediately undertook a double and contradictory task: to shake itself loose from cognate disciplines and to establish antique authority for its inquiry. Choosing your parents and grandparents is a task of self-definition that subject-areas, unlike people, can undertake. They pay for the privilege. The choices of ancestry made may, in the backward gaze of posterity, seem symptomatic rather than "natural"; ignored lines of kinship may seem disturbingly obvious to later inquirers.

So it is that Victorian anthropology is now seen as evidently implicated in colonialist assumptions; the confidence displayed in evolutionary patterns looks like a strategy for privileging European society. Developmental patterns are arranged with the white, middle-class European male as the crowned personage towards whom the past of the world has

been striving. Progress is reconceived as a competitive struggle in which all other cultural groups are inevitably worsted, and civilisation is taken to be synonymous with current European forms of society. That at least is the sour image of Victorian anthropology in the 1860s and 1870s that one readily derives from reading a run of journals such as the *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, the *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London*, the *Anthropological Review* and the *Proceedings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (particularly the proceedings of meetings such as that in Nottingham in 1866).

There is no doubt that a concentrated course of reading in anthropological and ethnological journals of the period, such as I have undertaken for this discussion, is both disheartening and exasperating because of the apparently impervious racism which underpins so many of the arguments. It is fruitless, however, simply to bunch together all Victorian anthropological writers as racists. That move flatters ourselves. Moreover such blanket rejection makes it impossible for us to hear a range of available meanings.

An effort is necessary in order to register the broader range and the subtler nuances available then within terms that now sound simply offensive. Embarrassment in the face of words such as "savages" or "natives" makes it difficult to discriminate the different registers across which such terms could function for Victorian writers and readers. When, for example, A. R. Wallace in *The Malay Archipelago*, or Robert Louis Stevenson in *In the South Seas* use such words, the pressures within them are very different from those asserted when Wake is working with them.[15] To dismiss all Victorian writers as racist because they use vocabulary that offends us now, or because they all work within a developmental view of human history, has a further powerful disadvantage. It has the effect of absolving present-day readers and allowing us to feel enlightened. The rejection costs us no self-inquiry.

More is to be gained by asking anew some of the questions that Victorians were asking themselves, or were proposing and then shying away from in their writing. Are all races ranged in a developmental order that mimics the development of the individual? Must all change come from without and be brought by Caucasian races? Is Western literature a sufficient resource for describing the life of other peoples? Who are our ancestors? Is humankind absolutely separated from the animals by its possession of language? Do the conditions of the working classes in England lead to racial degradation? Is there continuity between the needs of diverse cultures?

Intelligent unease about anthropology's ethnocentric assumptions began to surface in literature and in ethnography in the period before either Frazer or Freud were writing. Some writers grasped the ways in which ethnography casts light on the home culture. This led to ironic redescriptions of English assumptions and a shrewd recall of the parallels between observers and those remote groups they observed. In much professional anthropological literature the developmental metaphor distanced and empowered the Western observer, and allowed the assumption to prevail that tribal groups lived further back in cultural time. The same premises were active in descriptions of working-class and rural people.

Interested observers, such as natural scientists, missionaries and colonists, offered first-person accounts that were too often granted the special status of objectivity when quoted in anthropological articles. Natural scientists visited remote areas primarily to seek other than cultural data, stayed only a short time, and rarely knew the language of the locality; missionaries stayed longer, learnt the language, but sought to change radically the habits and belief-systems of the people among whom they dwelt; explorers, like the intermittently discredited du Chaillu, were passing through and seeking a story, a narrative bead in a longer chain; sailors and merchants traded, and tended to keep within the limited repertoire of commercial interchange; colonists inclined to see the native inhabitants as intruders on their own newly acquired territory.

These are not, of course, problems of report peculiar to Victorian anthropology. The evolutionary model may now long have been discarded from anthropological theory (though not from the afterlife of that theory in the assumptions of Western people). The problem of the observer remains recalcitrant. European observers were granted privileged status in the writing of nineteenth-century anthropologists, and not only by those who stayed at home. Field-work is now seen as necessary to professional insight and analysis. But there remains the difficulty of the writer's authorising presence in the writing. That presence is still often granted authority by expunging any *reference* to the observer, in accord with the ethnographic fiction of the invisible anthropologist. Such issues are at present matter of hot debate, as the writing of James Clifford and the contributors to *Writing Culture* makes clear.[16]

What does now seem strange is the privileging of first-person narratives by travellers, recorded at length, and frequently quite uncritically, in a gentlemanly network of allusion. So, Prichard, for example, cites within a couple of pages Dr Ruppell, Monsieur Costaz, Monsieur Burchell, Mr Daniells. Over and over again the account of the European traveller is accorded the authority of the first-person within the papers in

anthropological journals. First-person thus *stands in for* (and so usurps) the utterance of the people described. It presents itself – and is presented within the over-narrative – as if it *were* that experience, rather than a partial, possibly mistaken, certainly incomplete, interpretation of it.[17]

This screening means that in reading the journals we are usually presented with a conversation among gentlemanly peers, a conversation that frequently fails in irony, does not sufficiently observe itself, and makes possible that strange and characterising locution of the time: "mankind" as meaning white, implicitly middle- and upper-class, Europeans, distinguished from all other ethnic groups.

Prichard's most popular work, *The Natural History of Man*, opens thus: "The organised world presents no contrasts and resemblances more remarkable than those which we discover on comparing mankind with the inferior tribes."[18] He insists that all human beings belong to a common species, and he is thus a monogenist; but he still freely uses the discriminator "mankind". One may compare C. S. Wake, who opens his paper "The Psychological Unity of Mankind" in the *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London* (1867–9) with the passage below. The passage displays the ideological basis of the description of Europeans as mankind: Europeans are the full-grown adult human form; all other races are at an earlier stage on the developmental scale, to be formed and controlled like children.

> It is a familiar idea, and one which appears to be now accepted as a truth, that "mankind" (a term which, in this relation, has probably been used as synonymous with the Caucasian, or Indo-European, race) resembles in its totality an individual man, having, like him, an infancy, a childhood, youth, and manhood. In the early ages of the world man was in his infancy: and from that stage he has progressed, by gradual steps, until now he may be said to have attained – at least in peoples of the European stock – to a vigorous manhood. . . . The fact, which appears to have hitherto escaped attention, is the present existence of various families of mankind, exhibiting every stage of the supposed development.[19]

The counter-attempts made by writers in the second half of the nineteenth century to listen to other voices, beneath and beyond those of the dominant interpreters, concern me in this essay. The interrupting of that equable, overbearing conversation among peers can be heard in the work of Mayhew in *London Labour and the London Poor*, Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos", and – rather differently – in the novels of Grant

Allen, particularly *The Great Taboo* and *The British Barbarians*. Other voices can be heard, too, in the work of some anthropologists, such as W. Parker Snow and William Bailey Baker.

Victorian anthropologists were principally concerned with three interlocking topics: the question of kinship between diverse peoples; the question of a developmental hierarchy among races; and the question of language, both as a means of assessing the movements of peoples across the globe, and as a tool for the interpretation of cultural development.[20] Underlying all these topics was an anxiety about the status of humankind and its relationship to other species.[21]

The fascination with the "missing link" was one mode of controlling the space between man and the animals and preventing any merging. Language was conceived as "the rubicon", in Müller's phrase, between "man and the brutes". A further anxiety also had an evolutionary basis: whether the ordering of human culture was a progressive movement upwards, or whether there is evidence of widespread cultural degeneration, perhaps displayed in the life-styles of nomadic peoples, among others.

Another, more pressing, question seems to be locked beneath these anxieties, one that only rarely finds utterance: what is the status of the writer himself? Is he (almost always he) exempt from cultural determinants, perched at the apex of the developmental pyramid? The progression model was often used thus, to suggest that the Caucasian race, latest come, was also the loftiest, and therefore had the surest backward gaze across the history of development. The observer and the writer are doubly authoritative: first-person asserts authenticity, and the writer is an adult representative looking back down into the childhood and adolescence of humankind.

Opposition to this supremacist habit of mind came from what to us may seem unexpected directions. For example, because of its ghastly aftermath, we tend to take it for granted that the Aryan controversy was always about the invention of an elite origin for a favoured group. In the 1860s, however, it seemed threatening in a quite contrary style: it brought to light kinship (and, implicitly, equality) between races whom many commentators would have preferred to keep separate, or to range in a hierarchical sequence with Britain safely at the head. It is a useful corrective to our late-twentieth-century understanding of Aryanism to read the angry and discomfited objections by John Crawfurd, former President of the Ethnological Society, in the 1861 *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*. The article concludes thus:

> the theory which makes all the languages of Europe and Asia, from Bengal to the British Islands, however different in appearance, to have sprung from the same stock, and hence, all the people speaking them, black, swarthy, and fair, to be of one and the same race of man, is utterly groundless, and the mere dream of very learned men, and perhaps even more imaginative than learned. I can by no means, then, agree with a very learned professor of Oxford [Max Müller], that the same blood ran in the veins of the soldiers of Alexander and of Clive as in those of the Hindus whom, at the interval of two-and-twenty ages, they both scattered with the same facility. I am not prepared, like him, to believe that an English jury, unless it were a packed one of learned Orientalists, with the ingenious professor himself for its foreman, would, "after examining the hoary documents of language", admit "the claim of a common descent between Hindu, Greek and Teuton", for that would amount to allowing that there was no difference in the faculties of the people that produced Homer and Shakespear, and those that have produced nothing better than the authors of the Mahabarat and Ramayana; no difference between the home-keeping Hindus, who never made a foreign conquest of any kind, and the nations who discovered, conquered, and peopled a new world.[22]

Literature is Crawfurd's final court of appeal to his "English jury". Empire and the will to conquer become the self-proving mark of racial superiority.

The ability to read Western literature was taken by some observers as the guarantee of a capacity to progress. The debate concerning development was carried on at the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1866 in papers such as that by John Collinson "On the Indians of the Mosquito Territory" of Continental America: the king is

> a good specimen of what an enlightened Indian can become. His education, received at Jamaica, was quite equal to that of an ordinary English gentleman. With it he had acquired a refined taste hardly to be expected; he was never without one or two volumes of our best English poets in his pocket, and availed himself of every unoccupied moment to peruse them. But I do not want it to be supposed that civilization had made him effeminate in the slightest degree; on the contrary, he was the best shot and canoe's man in the whole country. . . . The Woolnas . . . are . . . the most interesting of all the tribes. They are still in their pristine state of barbarity; some of their number

> who were working for me . . . had actually never before seen a white man.[23]

The assumption here is that improvement means movement towards white culture and barbarity means ignorance of the white man. Yet, despite these ideologically determining assumptions, and locutions, Collinson's argument is also an attempt to break out of the fixing sequence of the developmental metaphor. Whereas others represented such groups as set fast in the "childhood" of man, he is arguing for the human potential for change, and for the force of environment rather than of cranial measurement.

It would be easy to gather a large number of more extreme instances, including farragoes of evidential non-sequiturs such as Owen Pike's essay "On the Psychical Characteristics of the English People": Pike argues that the British are descended from the ancient Greeks, not from Germanic races (Hellenes not Huns), and he sets about doing so from material such as the British sense of humour, their love of sports, and even novel-writing by women. This essay was published in the *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London*. The Pike article typifies the search for illustrious ancestors for the race as a counter to the insistence on "simian" and "uncivilised" kin implied in evolutionary theory.

Prichard had already made it clear that those who did not understand the language of the community they entered were likely to make false and fanciful assessments. Tylor later observed in disgust that the hunting and killing of indigenous peoples in Tasmania was made possible because the Europeans heard their language only as grunts and squeals and failed to understand that culture is always present in any human group.

But understanding the language is not quite the same as listening to the utterance. Some did – and were conscious of the difficulties of translation in either direction. In the same issue of *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* as contains Crawfurd's attack on Aryanism William Bailey Baker writes on "Maori Popular Poetry". He discusses Maori feats of memory, the retention of archaic forms of speech in the poetry, the unfamiliar but complex metric patterns, and the problems for Western listeners structural and otherwise. He accepts the need "to adopt foreign feelings, views, and prejudices" if Maori opera is to be appreciated; he defends the originals from his translations: "in criticising a translation we are testing the original in a foreign dress". He ends his article with a translation of a humorous Maori song which, in its turn, attempts through comedy to translate the exotic. It tells a story

pretty generally believed to be true. A Maori sailor, on his return from England, informed his friends that an English sailor named Haki – Jacky – was possessed of such enormous wealth that the Queen of England fell desperately in love with him. . . . finding him inexorable . . . she climbed to the top of the mast of one of her largest frigates, sung the following words, and cast herself headlong into the sea, uttering the last exclamation as the waters closed around her:–

> . . .
> Now I climb the topmost height
> Of the tall and slender mast,
> Whence to cast myself down headlong,
> That I may be *"dinner's ready!"*
> For the fishes of the ocean.–
> Hallo![24]

Baker admires much in the society he describes. In order to come to terms with the evidence complexity, wit, and power of Maori imaginative life he resorts to a degradationist argument: these are the last remnants of a former great race "and their ideas were consequently more refined and intelligible to the European mind".

It would, then, be false to suggest that Victorian anthropology offered only the affirmations of cultural imperialism: perceptions and their ideological contradictions were often held in equipoise – as in most periods of history. Edward Tylor, despite his insistence on a developmental pattern to the emergence of human culture, always emphasised the congruities between primitive and advanced culture: indeed, the title *Primitive Culture* (1871) emphasises, as it were against the odds, that no human society, past or present, lacks a complex culture of its own. This is demonstrated, in Tylor's view, in language itself, that specifically human achievement. Tylor remarks, "The development of language between its savage and cultured stages has been made in its details, scarcely in its principle." Poetry, he claims, sustains within the present time the systems of savage thought: "poetry . . . whose characteristic is that wild and rambling metaphor which represents the habitual expression of savage thought, the mental condition of the lower races is the key to poetry". Not only poetry but systems of law also, he argues, rely on "processes that did not first come into action within the range of written codes of comparatively cultured nations".[25]

Legal systems fossilise primitive traditions; Tylor cites the theory of primogeniture and the only recently abolished Jewish disabilities as

examples. For Tylor, human progress towards a reasoned civilisation is frequently hampered by these vestiges of savage thought. Himself a Quaker, he both understood sympathetically the experience of being other to the dominant culture and distrusted the ritualistic survivals of myth-systems at work in modern societies, including that of Britain.

Although he held to the progression, or development, theory of culture, Tylor was well aware that degradation theory could present what seemed powerful examples of cultural degeneration. Tylor cites the fanciful example of the Do-as-you-likes from Kingsley's *Water Babies*, whose hedonism leads to their reversion into ape-like creatures without the power of speech.[26] But he cites also the actual grave injustices of his own society, which force upon poor people the physical conditions which drive them into degradation. These effects are then theorised by degenerationists as universal: the fall of the modern world away from old high culture, and native peoples as the detritus of lost civilisations.

Tylor insists that there is no inevitability to social degeneration, nor are native peoples to be identified with slum-dwellers. The effects of environment on the poor are the responsibility of modern civilisation and can be corrected:

> What kind of evidence can direct observation and history give as to the degradation of men from a civilised condition towards that of savagery? In our great cities, the so-called "dangerous classes" are sunk in hideous misery and depravity. If we have to strike a balance between the Papuans of New Caledonia and the communities of European beggars and thieves, we may sadly acknowledge that we have in our midst something worse than savagery; it is broken-down civilisation. . . . The savage life is essentially devoted to gaining subsistence from nature, which is just what the proletarian life is not. Their relations to civilised life – the one of independence, the other of dependence – are absolutely opposite. To my mind the popular phrases about "city savages" and "street Arabs" seem like comparing a ruined house to a builder's yard.[27]

Tylor holds to his progressivist views but acknowledges in his metaphors (the collapsed ruined house as opposed to the potential houses of a builder's yard) that false class dependencies have produced a desolation among the poor of England of a kind quite different from the independence and the future potential of "savage" peoples.

A. R. Wallace, co-discoverer of the principle of natural selection and a convinced socialist, went further than Tylor's emphasis on continuity

between early and more developed forms of civilisation. Instead of seeing the present day as weighed down unprofitably with assumptions descended from the mists of barbarian antiquity, he insists that there have always, throughout time, been "men both savage and civilised". In his support he cites the views of Albert Mott in his presidential address to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool in 1873. Mott argues "that we have often entirely misread the past by supposing that the outward signs of civilisation must always be the same, and must be such as are found among ourselves".[28]

The connections between the discourse of racial difference and the discourse of class difference fuelled the work of Henry Mayhew. He opened *London Labour and the London Poor* by setting his inquiry in the context of Prichard's taxonomic ethnography. Before turning to the intimate first-person accounts of life given him by individual people, he frames his enterprise in the context of worldwide categories. Mayhew chooses Prichard's division of humankind into "the wanderers and the settlers" as his model for description and categorisation. The opening sentence reads,

> Of the thousand millions of human beings that are said to constitute the population of the entire globe, there are – socially, morally, and perhaps even physically considered – but two distinct and broadly marked races, viz., the wanderers and the settlers – the vagabond and the citizen – the nomadic and the civilized tribes.

The moral die is weighted in favour of the settlers: citizens, not vagabonds. The energy of Mayhew's description, however, goes into the wandering tribes:

> The nomadic races of England are of many distinct kinds – from the habitual vagrant – half-beggar, half-thief – sleeping in barns, tents, and casual wards – to the mechanic on the tramp, obtaining his bed and supper from the trade societies in the different towns, on his way to seek work. Between these two extremes there are several mediate varieties – consisting of pedlars, showmen, harvest-men, and all that large class who live by either selling, showing, or doing something through the country. These are, so to speak, rural nomads.[29]

The reason for Mayhew's great interest in wanderers rapidly becomes clear. This is an ethnological justification of his own field-work among the wandering tribes of London. Street wanderers have, he asserts,

> a greater development of the animal than of the intellectual or moral nature of man . . . they are all more or less distinguished for their high cheek-bones and protruding jaws – for their use of a slang language – for their lax ideas of property – for their general improvidence – their repugnance to continuous labour – their disregard of female honour – their love of cruelty – their pugnacity – and their utter want of religion.

Mayhew's fascinated sympathy with the individual is in tension with his delight in baroquely complex categories:

> *The Street-sellers of Second-hand Articles,* of whom there are again four separate classes; as (a) those who sell old metal articles – viz. old knives and forks, keys, tin-ware, tools, and marine stores generally; (b) those who sell old linen articles – as old sheeting for towels; (c) those who sell old glass and crockery – including bottles, old pans and pitchers, old looking glasses, &c.; and (d) those who sell old miscellaneous articles – as old shoes, old clothes, old saucepan lids &c., &c.[30]

The structure of Mayhew's work depends upon that tension, so that we discover the multifariousness of experience within each category, and thereby get outside the usual Victorian fear of "the crowd" and "the mass". Discussions of *race* in Victorian writing frequently provide a cover for discussions of class, and this is so for Mayhew.

The introduction is no mere attempt to render his task respectable, though it does dramatise the authority of Mayhew's presence by setting him at an extreme intellectual distance from his subjects at the outset. The work itself reverses this procedure: the life-experience of each individual is uttered and recorded almost without intervention, and without demur. It is, he announces in the Preface, "the first attempt to publish the history of a people from the lips of the people themselves". Indeed, so transparent does Mayhew render himself that it is easy for the unwary reader to fail to notice that all London rat-catchers, street-cleaners, Punch and Judy men and fishmongers, inlay workers, prostitutes and street-patterers seem preoccupied with their own lineage, their education and their religious beliefs.

Mayhew has edited out the questions that provoked the responses, just as he has edited out obscenity while rendering individual speech-patterns and dialects. There is, of course, another way of looking at it: that people were preoccupied with their lineage, education and religious beliefs, while the constraints of class relations meant that they uttered

no obscenities in the hearing of a middle-class interlocutor. The truth is probably more erratic than either of these single intepretations allows.

Mayhew's gift was that of acceptance: he does not seek to make judgements about where fantasy enters self-description, and, by the very act of sustained questioning and record, he assures people of the value of their experience and taps a well of memory. He respected the authority of those who talked to him: each is an expert on the work practices in which he or she is involved. We all know and can recount our work, our illnesses, our childhood. Some of Mayhew's urgency is formed by the cross-pull between the experiences held in common and the class divisions between his expected readers and the poor who so eloquently spoke to him. The exotic, his work suggests, is near home, in the next street, not far off on a developmental ladder conveniently placed on the other side of the world.

Kinship and difference was one of the most disagreeable issues posed by anthropology to Victorian people.[31] One famous poem of the period in particular disturbingly concentrates on the ingenuity of human *explanation*, the zeal with which human beings contrive satisfying cosmogonies and cosmologies out of the local conditions within which they survive. That poem is Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos or Natural Theology in the Island". It is a poem about interpretation as well as about the making of myth. It disturbs any easy developmental patterning. Even its epigraph is double-faced: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself." Ethnocentrism, cultural imperialism, anthropomorphism are jangled in that biblical rebuke. In the poem Caliban speaks at first in the third-person, then, as his account of his conditions makes a shape which he can inhabit, in achieved first-person. The poem is, and was taken to be, a satire on the anthropomorphism of theology. Some critics saw it also as an attack on contemporary science.[32]

Caliban imagines a hierarchy to the world based upon fitful and malign oppression, since that has been his experience of others and of his own desires. The oppression he has suffered has been primarily at the hands of Prospero, the absent figure of the poem. Whereas in Shakespeare's play the *presence* of Prospero grants him authority, here he is a conjured element in Caliban's ruminations. The "rational" is here a weapon of oppression as well as of self-discovery.

Caliban's utterance is initially declared as the voice of the "other", of the guttural, the primitive, even the ape-like. But the voice proves to be urgent, articulate, sophistical. It seizes sense-experience and intellectual conflict in sluggish yet passionate movements of mind and body. Caliban does more than curse with the language he has entered. He broods on

the issues that were preoccupying theologians and anthropologists alike. He achieves an explanation which is also an impasse.

> Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
> Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
> Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
> Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
> That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
> He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge
> eye
> By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
> That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
> And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
> But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
> That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
> About their hole – He made all these and more,
> Made all we see, and use, in spite: how else?
> He could not, Himself, make a second self
> To be His mate; as well have made Himself:
> He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
> An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains:
> But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
> Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be –
> Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
> Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
> Things He admires and mocks too, – that is it.
> Because, so brave, so better though they be,
> It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
>
> (ll. 44–67)

Caliban in this poem appropriates the iambic pentameters of Shakespeare's play, the hallowed form of English metrics, and uses it to turn the tables on the reader who assumes him to be a dolt, a fish, a monster, a primitive. Caliban's intricate language gives the lie to any hope that the present-day European has grown beyond the flawed impulses of the past. Lower and higher, present and past, observer and other, all discover themselves in Caliban's lambent and yet spiteful utterance.

But Caliban can imagine a possible future in which the conditions have changed, in which Setebos grows into the higher form, the Quiet, "as grubs grow butterflies". That future does not come within the time of the poem. Caliban is still locked within fetishism and sympathetic

magic, mind-features here produced by his condition of oppression as much as by his stage of cultural development.

Unlike in most of Browning's monologues, there is no dramatised listener within the poem. We are caught into the mind of Caliban and into the brooding reflexivity of his attempt to manage the universe. Caliban voices the synchronicity of all the phases of mental development; his savage sophistication jumbles that securely upward-moving scale favoured by ethnographers as well as theologians. Browning's poem was written in the early 1860s in the midst of the anthropological controversies concerning development and speciation that I have earlier described.[33]

The first literary responses to Frazer thirty years later were less multi-rooted and more playful. Grant Allen was probably the writer who most immediately used Fraser's work and took it into his own. He quickly perceived that the comparative method made room both for adventure and satire, for the exotic and the homely. In two of his novels particularly he played on Frazerian themes.[34] In *The Great Taboo* a vicar's daughter is cast away with an English gentleman on a cannibal island. They fall overboard from an ocean steamer called *The Australasian*. (Journeying on this fictional boat, incidentally, does seem to be hazardous, as the couple, in W. H. Mallock's *The New Paul and Virginia or Positivism on an Island*, published in 1878, start their adventure when the boiler on a ship of the same name blows up, leaving them castaway on an island where they discover the missing link.)

Allen pays tribute to Frazer in the Preface: "I desire to express my profound indebtedness, for the central mythological idea embodied in this tale, to Mr. J. G. Frazer's admirable and epoch-making work, *The Golden Bough*, whose main contention I have endeavoured incidentally to popularize in my present story."[35] He then takes the reader through a very thorough if whimsical course in rituals of sacrifice and taboo, including the rash picking of fruit from the golden bough by the English gentleman:

> They were passing by some huts at the moment, and over the stockade of one of them a tree was hanging with small yellow fruits. . . . He broke off a small branch as he passed, and offered a couple thoughtlessly to Muriel. She took them in her fingers and tasted them gingerly. "They're not so bad," she said, taking another from the bough. "They're very much like gooseberries."

The eating of the fruit has broken taboo and a tornado immediately ensues. The story is something of a farrago of inconsistencies. In the

copy I read a late-nineteenth-century hand has pointed out in the margin how often Allen forgets the taboo against touching. But Grant Allen reserves his fundamental joke to the end. Having survived horrors and vicissitudes too numerous to recapitulate, the English pair are rescued from the island and marry on the way back to England. The last scene takes place in a London drawing-room where Muriel's aunt receives them. Her one worry about their experiences is different from theirs: " 'how dreadful . . . that you and Felix should have been all these months alone on the island together without being married.' . . . Mrs Ellis sat still in her chair and smiled uncomfortably. It affected her spirits. Taboos, after all, are much the same in England as in Boupan."[36]

This insistence on the primitive nature of social inhibition was Grant Allen's strongest belief, and in *The British Barbarians* he takes the joke out beyond jest: the book opens with the comic encounter between the hero and a young man, a stranger, who asks him for directions to a lodging-house and inquires whether there are any rituals or taboos to be observed when entering such a house. Of course not, says our hero astonished. Next day he meets the young man again, who tells him sadly that he had forgotten to mention the essential ritual: no entry without baggage.

The stranger, called the Alien, proves to be an anthropologist from the twenty-sixth century who has come back through time to observe primitive British society of the late nineteenth century. Allen has seized the cultural relativism implicit in Frazer's associative methods and in the richness with which Frazer represents complex beliefs from widely divergent times and places.

Frazer's emphasis on the fruitfulness of association offset the rigidly developmental movement of many contemporary ethnologists and anthropologists. It allowed him to develop a copious comparativism. The power of association that he praised in the human mind was also his primary mode of organising argument. He could move freely as a mind-traveller across time and space within the scan of a single thought.

This apparently unsystematic procedure had methodological and ideological advantages: it liberated his work from the ruthless developmentalism that led earlier writers such as Crawfurd to think a comparison between Indian and Greek classic texts absurd. His comparative method set loose powers at odds with the severely developmental and law-bound world-set within which he yet believed himself to work.

Frazer's enterprise was entirely book-bound, dependent on description derived from the work of others rather than on field-work or direct observation.[37] His language was replete with allusions to English literary

sources. Thus he bound up the remote tribal customs he described into a half-familiar imaginative world indebted to Shakespeare and to a strong idea of England, as well as to classical sources. In his case, ethnocentrism was opened out by associationism. He could inhabit and link the imaginative processes of many human groups – so far as he could understand them. In the process, his native land and its customs were made strange. Like Grant Allen's twenty-sixth-century anthropologist, Frazer encouraged English readers to look askance at their own landscapes, values and experiences. What in Allen was realised as comedy, in Frazer became part of an arcane and tragic world. That world was inhabited by peoples from all ages and places, variously imaginative, synchronously imagined.

NOTES

1. At Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow and Liverpool.
2. R. Angus Downie, *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), p. 29.
3. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (1843), Everyman edn (London: J. M. Dent, 1912), p. 37.
4. James Prichard, *The Physical History of Mankind*, 3rd edn, 5 vols (London, 1836–47).
5. Charles Darwin: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London, 1859): *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London, 1871). T. H. Huxley, *Collected Essays*, 9 vols (London, 1892–5). F. Max Müller: *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 1st and 2nd sec. (London, 1861, 1864); *Chips from a German Workshop*, 4 vols (London, 1867–76); *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London, 1873), Herbert Spencer: *Social Statics; or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified and the First of Them Developed* (London, 1851); *Descriptive Sociology; or, Groups of Sociological Facts, Classified and Arranged* (London, 1873–81); Edward Tylor: *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (London, 1865); *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (London, 1871).
6. *GB 1*, I, p. vii. For the "facts" that had come to Frazer's attention, see Robert Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough": The Origin and Growth of an Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 50–2.
7. J. G. Frazer, *Creation and Evolution in Primitive Cosmogomies and Other Pieces* (London: Macmillan, 1935); quoted in Ackerman, p. 14.
8. T. Bendysshe, "A History of Anthropology", *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London*, I (1863–4), 335–420. This is a good tight discussion which includes material on early uses of the term "anthropology" back to 1501. Bendysshe characterises anthropology as "The Science of Man

. . . that science which deals with all the phenomena exhibited by collective man, and by him alone, which are capable of being reduced to law." In 1865 T. H. Huxley defined anthropology thus: "the great science which unravels the complexities of human structure; traces out the relations of man to other animals; studies all that is especially human in the mode in which man's complex functions are performed; and searches after the conditions which have determined his presence in the world" collected in *Man's Place in Nature and Other Anthropological Essays* (London, 1894), p. 210.

9. Gillian Beer: "The Death of the Sun", in Barry Bullen (ed.), *The Sun is God: Painting, Literature and Mythology in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 159–80; *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).
10. Quoted in Downie, *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"*, p. 54.
11. *GB A*, p. 713.
12. *GB2*, I, 61–2.
13. *GB2*, I, 62.
14. George W. Stocking, Jr, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), p. 257.
15. See Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800–1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982); George W. Stocking, Jr, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968); J. S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes to Racial Inferiority 1859–1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).
16. James Clifford and George Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1986); and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988).
17. Robert Louis Stevenson, in *In the South Seas* (London, 1892), p. 181, recognised that all communication between peoples of different cultures must be radically incomplete: "Of one thing, besides, I may be sure . . . I shall not hear the whole; for he is already on his guard with me; the amount of the lore is boundless."
18. James Prichard, *The Natural History of Man: Comprising Inquiries into the Modifying Influence of Physical and Moral Agencies on the Different Tribes of the Human Family*, 2nd edn (London, 1845), p. 4.
19. C. S. Wake, "The Psychological Unity of Mankind", *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London*, III, (1867–9), 134.
20. For a recent discussion of these issues in the nineteenth century see Colin Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987); and Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (London: Free Association Press, 1987).
21. Huxley, *Man's Place in Nature*, p. 89: "Is he [Man] something apart? Does he originate in a totally different way from Dog, Bird, Frog, and Fish, thus justifying those who assert him to have no place in nature and no real affinity with the lower world of animal life? Or does he originate in a similar germ, pass through the same slow and gradually progressive modifications, depend on the same contrivances for protection and nutrition, and finally enter the world by the help of the same mechanism? The reply is not doubtful for a

moment, and has not been doubtful any time these thirty years."

22. John Crawfurd, "On the Aryan or Indo-Germanic Theory", *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, n. s., I (1861), 286–7. Crawfurd's later paper "The European and Asiatic Races" prompted an interesting reply. See Dadabhai Naoroji, *The European and Asiatic Races: Observations on the Paper Read by John Crawfurd, Esq., F. R. S. before the Ethnological Society on Feb. 14 1866, read before the Ethnological Society March 27 1866* (London, 1866).
23. John Collinson, "On the Indians of the Mosquito Territory", *Proceedings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, Anthropological Section 1866, pp. 73–4.
24. W. H. Baker, "Maori Popular Poetry", *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, n.s., I (1861), 58–9.
25. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, II, 446, 43.
26. Ibid., I, 376–7. "To suppose that theories of a relation between man and the lower mammalia are only a product of advanced science, would be an extreme mistake."
27. Ibid., I, 43–3. Ackerman, in his biography of Frazer, makes it clear that Tylor was one of the most important formative influences on Frazer's work.
28. A. R. Wallace, *Natural Selection and Tropical Nature* (London, 1891), pp. 424–5.
29. Thomas Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861–2), Dover; London: Constable, 1968), p. 1.
30. Ibid., pp. 2–3.
31. Margaret Harkness, who wrote under the pseudonym "John Law", tellingly deconstructed phrases like "street Arabs" in her novels of East End London life, such as *A City Girl* (London, 1887) and *Captain Lobe* (London, 1889), later called *In Darkest London*. See Gerd Bjørhovde, *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880–1900* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
32. "Caliban upon Setebos" was written during the early 1860s. Boyd Litzinger and Donald Smalley, editors of *Browning: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), include in their selection reviews by Walter Bagehot ("mind in difficulties – mind set to make sense of the universe under the worst and hardest circumstances" – p. 275), Edward Dowden ("the natural theology of one who is merely an intellectual animal" – p. 428) and many others. The most extensive Victorian criticism of Browning's poem is to be found in the work of the historian, ethnographer and literary critic Daniel Wilson, *Caliban: The Missing Link* (London, 1873).
33. Wake, in *Memoirs Read before the Anthropological Society of London*, III, 134: "From this sketch of man's mental development, it is seen that it has five chief stages, which may be described as the selfish, the wilful, the emotional, the empirical, and the rational; these several phases will be found to have their counterpart in the mental condition of the several great races of mankind." (European manhood is, of course, identified with the last of these phases.)
34. Grant Allen, *The Great Taboo* (London, 1890), and *The British Barbarians* (London, 1895).
35. Allen, *The Great Taboo*, p. i.

36. Ibid., pp. 96, 280.
37. In "Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology", the 1986 Frazer Lecture at the University of Liverpool, Marilyn Strathern offers an account of Frazer's literariness and its relation to his audience as part of an important larger discussion of modernist assumptions in anthropology.

IV

THE BIRTH OF HUMILITY: FRAZER AND VICTORIAN MYTHOGRAPHY

Steven Connor

I ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE INTROJECTION OF MYTH

NO DOUBT Robert Ackerman, J. G. Frazer's most recent biographer, is right to warn us that "to speak decisively . . . about Frazer's ideas concerning the origin and meaning of myth and the relation of myth to ritual at any one moment during the quarter-century represented by the writing of *The Golden Bough* is impossible because of the theoretical confusion that obtains on this question in his work".[1] The subject of mythology provoked the same kind of impassioned uncertainty in Frazer as it did in many other writers of the nineteenth century. But this essay aims to suggest that, without seeking to reduce Frazer to coherent simplicity on the matter of myth, it may yet be possible to read some of the meanings and functions of his incoherence, to see his as an expressive rather than merely adventitious confusion.

And yet, at first sight, the most striking thing about Frazer's treatment of mythology, throughout *The Golden Bough* as elsewhere in his writings, is how little he feels the need to treat the subject at all in its own right. In this, his work may be said to be representative of the shift that took place during the second half of the nineteenth century from the dominance of the "solar" school of comparative mythology, centred around the ideas of Max Müller, to that of the "anthropological" school, represented in the work of Edward Tylor, J. F. M'Lennan, Andrew Lang (Müller's great public opponent during the 1870s and 1880s) and Frazer himself. In one sense this shift may be seen as the side-stepping of what had been an obsessively recurring set of problems for mid-nineteenth-century scholars of myth. The questions which Müller set out to answer were, "What is mythology? How does it arise and develop? What does it mean?" and, in a sense, most importantly, "What are its effects?" Answering these questions certainly involved turning to various kinds of

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

anthropological evidence about beliefs and social practices, but, in terms of intellectual priorities and mode of procedure, mythology and the language which brought it into being were the organising centre for Müller and his fellow solarists. We can say, indeed, that mythology focused for the mid-century a connected group of problems and anxieties about the nature of thought, consciousness and language.

The advent of anthropological mythography in the later years of the century brought with it a much simpler way of explaining mythology and with it an apparent dissolution of the epistemological dilemmas it embodied. For the anthropological mythographers, myths were not distortions of belief, or the expression of a "disease of language", but simply the reflections or embodiments of particular practices and ways of life. Edward Tylor argued that myths were the more or less direct expression of a kind of primitive science, a body of explanations, centring on the theory of animism, of the workings of the natural world. The savage, Tylor wrote, "transfigures into myths the facts of daily experience".[2] For Andrew Lang, in a similar way, myths came directly out of the conditions of social, economic and psychological life. Consequently, the seeming universality of many myths was not to be explained by diffusion or cultural borrowing, but simply by means of the broadly similar conditions obtaining in different cultures at equivalent stages of development. In *Custom and Myth* (1893), Lang wrote that the student of myth and folklore, "holding that myth is a product of the early human fancy, working on the most rudimentary knowledge of the outer world . . . thinks that differences of race do not much affect the early mythopoeic faculty. He will not be surprised if Greeks and Australian blacks are in the same tale."[3] Myths resemble each other for broadly the same reasons that pottery and arrowheads resemble each other, "because they were originally framed to meet the same needs out of the same material".[4]

This intellectual gambit seemed to relieve anthropology of its worries about the ways in which mythology appeared to modify, distort, or even determine primitive, and perhaps contemporary, thought. Notoriously, Max Müller had insisted that myths arose out of linguistic misprisions, being the attempts by early cultures to explain the cryptic or incomprehensible proverbial expressions and metaphors retained in their language, by turning them into narratives. Mythology was therefore in some sense to be understood as narrative or linguistic form obstructing or falsifying the clarity of thought, or in terms of a certain corrupting excess of the material substance of language over the immateriality of abstract reason. Considered in this way as a kind of conceptual pathology, the effects of mythology remained present and toxic to clear thought even in the

modern, post-mythical world, in the sedimented effects of metaphor in scientific or philosophical disquisition.[5] None of this seemed problematic any more once myths could be shown to arise simply and immediately out of social and psychological life. Where myth and reason were at odds in Müller and mid-century comparative mythologists, anthropological mythographers later in the century wanted to claim their strict equivalence; and, whereas for Müller myths (dangerously) created beliefs, for the "anthropological school", of whom Frazer became the leading representative, myths simply *were* belief. In a letter of 22 August 1888, written at the beginning of his anthropological career, Frazer took issue with his friend Henry Jackson for suggesting that myths could be a later development out of customs and institutions:

> How do you explain mythology? Was primitive man rational in his practice but irrational in his theory? Or do you think, like the "disease of language" people, that he was at first rational in his theory (philosophy of nature) as well as in his practice and that mythology, like superstition, was a parasitic aftergrowth? On my view there is no divorce between theory and practice as the first of these suppositions involves, and no such relapse from reason to unreason as is entailed by the second. Myths are only ideas of the same type as those which gave rise to superstitious practices and savage institutions; but dealing with things beyond human reach they (the myths) could not have the practical consequences which were produced by the similar ideas about things within reach of man. If we use mythology in the sense of primitive man's ideas in general, then superstition is only applied mythology – superstition is primitive ideas plus practice, mythology is primitive ideas minus practice.[6]

There is evidence to suggest that throughout this career Frazer held, or returned to, his fundamental view of the relationship of mythology to belief and institution – at least, whenever he attempted explicitly to formulate his position about the question of mythology. In 1911, he became involved in an epistolary debate with the newly installed Reader in Social Anthropology at Oxford, R. R. Marett, who had argued in his inaugural lecture that ritual, or, as he glossed it, "a routine of external forms", was historically prior to formal belief.[7] As Robert Ackerman shows, Frazer was stung by the fact that Marett recruited to his position the work of Frazer's close friend and mentor William Robertson Smith, and his reply to Marett takes the form of a defence of (his interpretation of) Robertson Smith's position:

> To generalise and affirm that myth or dogma is universally posterior to ritual is, I believe, an idea that never occurred to him. On the contrary he always assumed that dogma was prior to ritual, and the whole aim of his investigations was to discover the idea (dogma, myth or whatever you please to call it, in short the thought) on which ritual is founded. . . . I entirely agree with his views, as I interpret them, and have always acted on them in my writings, laying more stress on ritual than on myth (dogma) in the study of the history of religion, not because I believe ritual to be historically prior to dogma or myth (that I regard as absolutely false), but because ritual is much more conservative than dogma and far less apt to be falsified consciously or unconsciously, and therefore furnishes a far surer standing-ground for research.[8]

The extraordinary bluntness with which Frazer affirms the identity of myth and dogma – both are simply and categorically "thought", and no more about it – expresses clearly the belief, or will to believe, in myth as having an absolute correspondence not only with forms of ritual practice but, more importantly, with reasoning itself. There is, in fact, an odd congruence here between Frazer and Müller, since both project the earliest condition of man as a kind of primordial unity – for Frazer, a unity of thought and ritual action, and, for Müller, a unity of thought and language. "Language and thought are inseparable", Müller wrote in *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1861). "Words without thought are dead sound; thoughts without words are nothing. To think is to speak low; to speak is to think loud. The word is the thought incarnate."[9] Indeed, Müller saw it as his project to rescue language and thought from the diseased or "mythological" condition in which "language assumes an independent power, and reacts on the mind, instead of being, as it was intended to be, the realization and outward embodiment of the mind", and to restore the primitive unity of the *logos*.[10] Although Frazer is much less explicitly concerned than Müller with the question of language, his account of the sacramental unity of myth (as "dogma" or "thought") and ritual action is still in form and function a linguistic one, in that it is concerned with a relationship or economy of representation – rituals represent myths, practices are the embodied form of beliefs. We may note, however, that, although there is a shared structure of thought between Müller and Frazer, each uses the word "myth" in a radically different sense. Whereas, for Müller myth is what disturbs and corrupts the close, "primitive" correspondence between signifier and signified, according to Frazer myth, as the "thought" or the meaning behind the

ritual, is precisely the signified of the ritual signifier. Both writers can be seen to be offering some kind of solution to the breaking of the bond between language and thought, but, where Müller's solution is to extroject myth, as the threatening, supplementary Other of thought, Frazer's solution is to introject it, never permitting the gap to widen between thought and representation, and so seemingly inoculating thought against the dangerous virulence which, for Müller, is mythology.

However, despite the remarkable firmness with which Frazer seems to sew up the debate about mythology, the topic has a remarkable residual force to fascinate and perplex in his work, as it does in the work of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists. As Robert Ackerman has clearly shown, there are at least three, mutually exclusive hypotheses about the origin and nature of myth which surface regularly throughout *The Golden Bough* and other works by Frazer. These are, firstly, the euhemerist hypothesis that myths are distantly based upon the lives of real heroes and kings; secondly, the cognitionist hypothesis that myths are mistaken efforts at scientific explanation; and, thirdly, the ritualistic hypothesis, which explains myths as the secondary elaborations or reformulations of ritual and magical ceremonies which have died out, or been superseded or forgotten.[11] The last of these three is the most striking and significant, of course, in that it flatly contradicts the position that Frazer maintained against Henry Jackson and R. R. Marett, that myths, in the sense of ideas or beliefs, are always anterior to the rituals which embody them. Time and again in all editions of *The Golden Bough*, myths are described as being secondary to ritual, as embellishments, rationalisations or allegorical refigurings of beliefs and practices which have been at least partially forgotten.[12] Often Frazer argues that myths are simply attempts to explain old rituals, as when he writes that "the story that Attis unmanned himself under a pine-tree was clearly devised to explain why his priests did the same beside the sacred violet-wreathed tree at his festival", or explains that the Homeric Hymn to Demeter gives "in more or less veiled language mythical explanations of the origin of particular rites".[13] And this is Frazer's allegorical reading of the myth of Hippolytus:

> In the story of the tragic death of the youthful Hippolytus, we may discern an analogy with similar tales of other fair but mortal youths who paid with their lives for the brief rapture of the love of an immortal goddess. These hopeless lovers were probably not always mere myths, and the legends which traced their split blood in the purple bloom of the violet, the scarlet stain of the anemone, or the crimson flush of

> the rose were no idle poetic emblems of youth and beauty fleeting as the summer flowers. Such fables contain a deeper philosophy of the relation of the life of man to the life of nature – a sad philosophy which gave birth to a tragic practice.[14]

The aim in each of these cases is to decipher the myth, to strip it back to what Frazer likes to call its "original nucleus", its "kernel", or its pre-mythical "essence".[15]

One way to explain this apparent contradiction in Frazer's work, in which myth both precedes ritual and succeeds it, as both essence and accidence, is of course simply to insist on a sharper distinction than Frazer does between his two uses of the word "myth", the first to mean a body of religious belief, and the second to mean the particular narrative forms, encompassing supernatural characters and events, which embody and explicate such belief. But this would be precisely to evaporate the problem, which is precisely that, in Frazer's work, the two meanings are so oddly and intricately entangled. In fact, for Frazer, as for other theorists of myth in the nineteenth century, this question of whether myth is primary or secondary proves a crucial one with implications that run off in unpredictable directions. As we shall see, the issue of succession connects myth in particular with questions regarding the origin and nature of thought and language, and the destination of human history – which is to say, to the position of the anthropologist himself, writing at the "end" of history, and attempting to understand and narrate his culture's relationship to what has anticipated it.

II EVOLUTION AND DEGENERATION

Like most other anthropologists of his generation, Frazer was a convinced evolutionist, holding firmly to the view that human development was linear and continuous, and resisting any suggestion that the human race has experienced any kind of degeneration from original felicity. As he wrote scornfully to Henry Jackson in 1888, regarding the question of the priority of myth to ritual,

> Human progress or development has been steady and continuous. The first incorrect ideas suggested by the world and the institutions based on them have been gradually corrected by the rise of truer ideas and hence of better institutions. Man has risen, not fallen. On your view, *intellectual* progress at least has not been continuous. Man began with

> reason, lapsed into unreason, and then struggled out of the quagmire back into reason. This is the Fall of Man. Really, I think you might throw Adam and the apples into the bargain, and swallow the whole. Between one theory of degradation and another there is very little to choose.[16]

It was in the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* that Frazer developed the model of development that was to dominate his work thereafter. It is a model that is not only progressive but also universalist, suggesting that human beings have always and everywhere been the same and have therefore developed uniformly in the same direction, through the three broad stages of magic, religion and science. In the account which Frazer repeatedly restates through the successive editions of *The Golden Bough*, magic is the stage at which the "savage", perceiving how intimately his own life is bound up with natural processes, develops a theory of the universal concord or relatedness of the visible world, in terms of the two great principles of similarity and contiguity in space and time, and comes to believe that he can control the natural world by means of magical arts and ceremonies based upon these principles. The religious stage supervenes, according to Frazer, with the realisation that magical rites cannot affect such things as the passage of the seasons, and the projection of the forces governing these things in the forms of supernatural and divine beings: "They now pictured to themselves the growth and decay of vegetation, the birth and death of living creatures, as effects of the waxing or waning strength of divine beings, of gods and goddesses, who were born and died, who married and begot children, on the pattern of human life."[17] The scientific stage is that of the modern world, and of course also involves a self-designation by an anthropological science which is only able to distinguish the magical and religious stages because it has itself grown beyond them. Indeed, as some have observed, the implicit motive behind much of the rationalist Frazer's work is to assist the definitive passage of his own time beyond the deluding grip of religious ideas.

It is this animus against religion which actually produces one of the most striking and recurrent contradictions in Frazer's theory of uniform development. For, running athwart the logic of even and continuous development in Frazer's account, is a tendency to accord the primitive, magical stage of human development a privilege over the subsequent religious stage. This is because Frazer sees the magical stage as exemplifying a kind of practical reason, a theory of the relationship between the different parts of the natural world which may be mistaken,

but is not in itself irrational or superstitious, since it depends upon a fundamental conception which is identical with that of science, of the uniformity and homogeneity of nature. In both magic and science, "the succession of events is assumed to be perfectly regular and certain, being determined by immutable laws, the operation of which can be foreseen and calculated precisely."[18]

This means that, surprisingly, Frazer's model has another similarity to that of Müller, in its projection of a functional and conceptual continuity between the earliest and the most recent phases of human history. With the coming of science, Frazer writes, magic "reappears from the obscurity and discredit into which it has fallen. . . . Alchemy leads up to chemistry."[19] Whereas for Müller the continuity was between the tight bond of word and thought in the Aryan *Ur-logos*, and the recovery of that bond in contemporary science, for Frazer the continuity was more generally in the survival of reason throughout the different stages, despite its occultation by religion. This means that, alongside and across the official model of uninterrupted progression which Frazer's work offers is written a narrative or myth of degeneration and return.

There is a fundamental need in Frazer's work to protect this link between the beginning and the end of human history, which amounts to the protection of the category of *reason*, which Frazer finds embodied embryonically in the practice of man in the magical stage. For Frazer, the social activity of man in the magical stage is rational because it is reducible to a number of consistent principles. Time and again he assures his readers that, at this early stage, there can be no *conscious* "idea of the world as a system of impersonal forces acting in accordance with fixed and invariable laws",[20] but, sometimes in the same breath, he will claim that all such actions must be based upon or governed by some sort of rational theory which, even if it is not available to primitive man, may be distinguishable by the anthropologist. What is striking about Frazer's account of the magical stage, throughout all the versions of *The Golden Bough*, is the way that this analytic separability repeatedly resolves itself into an actual chronology, whereby primitive man "acts on" the ideas which he already, somehow *has*. An interesting ambiguity that we may note here about Frazer's conception of the magical stage is that it insists simultaneously on the absolute *equivalence* of thought and ritual and their functional *separability*.

It is perhaps for this reason that Frazer's account of the origin and functions of mythology, in the more usual sense of supernatural narratives embodying religious belief, is so thin and nervous. For Frazer's interest is in the history of forms of reason. Mythology in this sense is most

characteristic of the religious stage of man's development, in which mythological narrative seems to be a kind of surplus which clouds and displaces reason. Where magical man is at least possessed of a coherent system of ideas and principles, religious man has no better mode of accounting for the rising and setting of the sun, the cycle of the seasons or the fructifying of crops, than stories about the caprice or ill-temper of the gods. Although the religious stage is an advance on one way, in that man has come to realise the folly of his idea that he can control the processes of nature by means of magic, it is regressive in another, more important way, for it induces an irrational passivity and helplessness. What is most important for Frazer is the surrender of intellectual confidence and control that is entailed by primitive man's shift from magic to religion, for "now his old free bearing is exchanged for an attitude of lowliest prostration before the mysterious powers of the unseen".[21] Actually, the confusion of man at this stage is so marked for Frazer that there is no longer even any clear distinction between the magical and the religious stages. Characteristic of the religious stage, Frazer tells us, is the peculiar belief that supernatural deities can still be swayed by the magical practices which had previously been thought to operate directly on nature itself. In this, Frazer identifies religion not only with absurdity and error but with profound self-contradiction, or failure even to observe its own cohering principles. Frazer starts to excuse this lapse, but cannot help intensifying his rationalist accusation:

> The inconsistency of acting upon two opposite principles, however it may vex the soul of the philosopher, rarely troubles the common man; indeed he is seldom even aware of it. His affair is to act, not to analyse the motives of his action. If mankind had always been logical and wise, history would not be a long chronicle of folly and crime.[22]

Although it could hardly be claimed that Frazer saw the preceding magical stage as "logical and wise", it seems clear that he does wish to see religion as a particularly intense form of the error in which simply "acting" takes the place of and begins to determine reasoning, instead of being governed by it. It is striking that Frazer usually resists the enlargement of this argument to include the magical stage, and my suggestion here will be that the degeneratist curve in Frazer's account of the religious stage serves partly to protect against such an enlargement, and specifically against the terrifying idea that reason and belief, far from standing serenely behind actions and institutions, might be their effect, and that thought might be determined by and derived from physiology,

action, movement, biological materiality. Frazer's debate with R. R. Marett in 1911 focuses this struggle to protect a belief in the continuity of human reason from irrationalist accounts of the origin of religion such as those of Emile Durkheim in France, and the Cambridge ritualists, Jane Harrison, F. M. Cornford and A. B. Cook, in England.[23] Frazer's first letter to Marett moves abruptly from the question of the relationship of myth to ritual, and the rebuttal of the suggestion that myths could be derived from rituals rather than *vice versa*, to a denial that the faculty of reasoning could ever have evolved out of pure matter:

> Because it is or may be true (I am not able to pronounce an opinion on the question) that in the lowest forms of animal life – protozoa, infusoria, or whatever they are – movement precedes thought or whatever corresponds to thought in these lowly beings, it has been inferred that religious rituals must have been performed first and a theory or dogma of it invented afterwards. I do not think that we have any right to make this prodigious leap from protozoa to men. Religious ritual even of the lowest savages is a highly, enormously complex phenomenon of thought, sensation, and action, and to compare it to, and to treat it on the same level with, the instinctive twitchings and motions of protozoa, infusoria, or molluscs or the like is, in my opinion, quite illegitimate. Savage ritual, as I have studied it, seems to me to bear the imprint of reflexion and purpose stamped on it just as plainly as any actions of civilised men.[24]

Frazer is here defending the integrity of reason by suggesting that, although it may perhaps be subject to degeneration and corruption, it cannot be imagined as having evolved out of something else. He thus affirms the possibility of degeneration against evolution; unreason may supervene upon reason, but reason can never be derived from unreason. Now, from Frazer's point of view, there may seem to be precious little to choose between the intellectual threats offered by the idea that reason has evolved out of material existence, and the idea that reason is subject to contamination by religious superstition. But there is in fact a crucial distinction. The degenerative aetiology works by one form of what Derrida has called the logic of supplementation, in which an original truth or essence is corrupted by some kind of excrescence, but in such a way as to preserve and perhaps even reinforce the distinction between an original presence ("thought") and what it has descended to ("religion", "mythology").[25] The evolutionary chronology (for no particularly stringent logical reason, it is true), promises the purity of absolute self-consciousness

only as a destination, and offers no guarantee that this process of differentiation will ever be complete, that pure thought will ever be able to detach itself entirely from the encrustations of matter. Indeed, the evolutionary chronology may suggest – as it seems to me it does in Frazer's case – that, if thought can be said to have emerged from matter, it may never be possible ultimately to distinguish between the two, or to affirm thought as a self-defining presence. The degeneratist model allows for the sense of a stable difference between thought and matter, while the evolutionary model folds this pattern back into undecidable difference within each. It is for this reason that the degeneratist strain recurs so insistently in Frazer's thought, serving, as it does, to protect the idea of pure reason against the threat and suspicion of inter-involvement with and determination by the materiality of social practices, institutions, language and history.

As such, the magic–religion distinction also protects a chronology and syntax of conscious and unconscious life. The stage of magic involves a set of actions which can always be assumed to be anticipated by what Frazer calls "a definite train of reasoning",[26] whereas the stage of religion is characterised by actions and social institutions whose meaning is no longer wholly available to or in the command of consciousness. In the religious stage, thought may no longer be conceived of as the possession of individual reasoning subjects. Not the least of the threats offered by Marett's irrationalist account of the origin of religion was that, in place of the isolated and culturally advanced reasoning individual so often posited by Frazer, it envisaged a subordination to "the mass of cultural institutions", which "embody and express a kind of collective soul".[27] We may connect Frazer's distaste for this surrender of individual consciousness with his well-known reluctance to read Freud, despite Freud's manifest and deep debt to his work. Here too, Frazer might have been confronted with an intolerable attack on the sovereignty of the reasoning, self-aware subject.

The religious stage represents a yielding of consciousness largely because of the contaminating effects on practical–magical reason of mythical narratives, which no longer know what they are saying. When religious rituals in turn are based upon these mythical narratives, the adherents of the religion no longer know what they are doing or why they are doing it. An example is offered by Frazer's discussion of the myth of Dionysos and the misunderstanding which it embodies of the original ritual custom of killing a god in animal form. The myth presents us with an anthropomorphised Dionysos, about whom however still hangs "a vague and ill-understood connexion" with the animals who originally

personated the god. Frazer highlights (and enjoys) the logical nonsense which ensues when, in later ritual practice influenced by the myth, the animal is actually sacrificed to the god, remarking with gentle scorn that this yields "the strange spectacle of a god sacrificed to himself on the ground that he is his own enemy. And as the deity is supposed to partake of the victim offered to him, it follows that, when the victim is the god's old self, the god eats of his own flesh".[28] In this respect, we may say again that Frazer's view of the function of mythology and ritual has a similarity to that of Max Müller and the solarists; save that, where Müller blamed the language of mythology for its muddling effect on thought, Frazer saw religious representations in general as the cause of error and mystification. So, despite Frazer's apparent abolition of the problem of mythology, by the act of introjection described above, which attempts to assimilate the dangerous potencies of mythology to the functions of reason and belief, mythology, in Müller's extrojected form as the narrative unconscious, stubbornly recurs in Frazer's work. Indeed, its recurrence defies the very structure by which it has been extrojected, as the Other of thought. We may even say that the problem of mythology traces its effects most deeply and damagingly not when Frazer is discussing mythology, but when he is discussing its preferred predecessor.

III MAGIC AND PERFORMANCE

We have seen how much Frazer staked on the idea of the primary magical stage of human development. However, all the way through his work there is an intrinsic complication in the idea of the magical. Magic is performed, he argues, in order to bring about particular effects and results in the physical world, to influence the weather, assist the growth of crops, or bring about fertility. Frazer wants to claim, therefore, that magic, unlike religious mythology, is a form of direct action, rather than a signifying practice. But what Frazer cannot easily acknowledge is the fact that this magical action always also involves acts of representation, and enactments of relationships of contiguity and similarity. Here, Frazer's examples abundantly embarrass his hypothesis, showing how magic always involves the imaginary construction of relationships of contiguity and similarity, whether it be in the making of effigies, the performance of ceremonies or the simulation of natural processes. Magic depends upon a kind of performance, which is never simply action in or on the world, but a symbolic acting out *of* the world. For magical man, the world's significance can never be simply known, it must be performed.

It may be useful to compare Frazer's account of the operations of magic with another famous account, the description of the *fort–da* game given by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* Freud interprets a game in which a young child repeatedly throws away and retrieves a cotton-reel on a piece of string, accompanying the action with cries which, for Freud, approximated to *fort* ("gone") and *da* ("there").[29] Freud's story is an excellent example of the operation of sympathetic magic; for he interpreted the child's game as a way of symbolising, and therefore exercising mastery over, the repeated absences of its mother. The curious thing about this game is its complex structure of unconscious knowledge. The game "works" because the child knows that it is *not* its mother on the end of the piece of string, knows that, unlike its real mother, the cotton-reel may be manipulated at will. Indeed, the game itself can only succeed by virtue of the fact that it must really fail, that it cannot influence the real mother. The very fact of substitution is an acknowledgement of the limitation of the game, though at the same time it is also what makes the game possible. The child, we must say, both knows and does not know the truth about the performance, which is that it *is* a performance.

But there is something unsatisfactory about this language, in which knowing and not knowing are attributed to the child, as it were separately from and in advance of its actions. In fact, we must say that knowledge in this case cannot simply be the possession of the child. The contradictory knowledge of simultaneous success and failure that the game offers is actually contained *in the relationship of the child to the game* – that is to say, in some complex space triangulated by will, intellection and signifying practice, in a performance which could never be simply originated by consciousness, or governed by a single, self-identical principle. We may here return to Frazer's theory of the operations of magic and ritual. Just like the child's *fort–da* game, the magical ceremonies of primitive man must involve a complex thinking through representation, in which, to use Frazer's terms, "movement" does not exactly precede "thought", but does, in some complex way, make thought possible, and may determine it. The mind–body dualism that lies behind Frazer's rationalist idea of magic as the impress of pure thought on the whole realm of material practice (language, ritual, custom, mimicry, game) goes in fear precisely of what it seems time and again to demonstrate – that there is a kind of thinking in the (social) body, a mode of knowledge and reasoning through material practice, that does not securely or absolutely know itself. Thought in this sense cannot simply be read off or retrieved from the evidence of custom and ritual, since it is the complex product of action.

R. R. Marett's *The Birth of Humility*, which seems to have embodied so much that was troubling for Frazer on this score, provides evidence of how this process might work in primitive *rites de passage.* Marett at one point claims, against Frazer, that primitive man "dances" rather than "reasons out" his religious belief.[30] However, he is far from claiming a simple inversion of Frazer's model to suggest that instinct and motor impulse displace cognition altogether. Marett's argument is that the "social routine" of ritual comes between nature and reason, or, as he puts it, "interposes . . . between a man and the brute propensions of his body".[31] Interestingly, the ritual performs its somatic function even when, as is usually the case, its formalised nature, and the necessity of abiding by a fairly inflexible ritual calendar, mean that it does not coincide for actual individuals with the exact periods of biological and social transition that it ritualises – motherhood, adolescence, and so on. Such a ritual is simultaneously representation and biological fact, its meaning lying not in the fact that it is direct magical action on the world, but in its distance from the world, in the fact that it is a "pause" or digression from life and conscious awareness, in the interests of enhanced individual and social vitality:

> The force of social suggestion being simply enormous, the soul that is invited and expected by society to pass through sickness to increased strength does so, though in an ideal and moral way, rather than under literal compulsion of the moral nature. Pause is the necessary condition of the development of all those higher processes which make up the rational being.[32]

We have seen, then, that, for all Frazer's denial of mythology (as the contamination of thought by the narrative or signifying unconscious), mythology is present at the very beginnings of human culture, in the midst of the primal practical reason of magic, in that magic always involves the mythological act of representation. As we have seen, Frazer's distinction between magic and religion characterises magic as a system of rules and behaviour which is rational and quasi-scientific in that it obeys the law of non-contradiction, seeing the world and man's actions in it as governed by immutable and ubiquitous natural laws. The religious stage is non-scientific in its intellectual incoherence; advanced individuals in the religious stage *know* that magical practice is not effective – this is the very reason in the first place for the development of myths of supernatural beings – but continue nevertheless to attempt to influence the gods by magical ceremonies.[33] Frazer's distinction between a magical

practice that knows itself because it works by self-consistent and identifiable principles and a mythical or religious practice that no longer knows itself because it is unaware of its lack of self-consistency is threatened by the view of ritual as representation, for it suggests that no magical practice could ever know itself purely for what it is. In so far as it is magic, ritual must think of itself as effective practice; in so far as it is representation, ritual must know and acknowledge itself as ineffective practice (otherwise there would be no need for the act of representation at all, and man could exercise his will through pure thought). The awareness of this irreducible internal discrepancy in magic contradicts the distinction Frazer makes between magic and religion – contradicts, let us say, the very contradiction between non-contradiction and contradiction. Like the child's magical game with the cotton-reel, knowledge is both present and absent in magic, both *da* and *fort*.

IV AUTHORITY AND HUMILITY

Why are the implications of this resisted in Frazer's work? I have already suggested one answer to this, in that Frazer wanted and needed to affirm the distinctness of the human, to affirm that, even at the distance of millennia, man was still recognisably the possessor of a reasoning faculty which marked him off inalienably from the twitching protozoon. But there is more to be said. For in question throughout Frazer's work is also the exercise of reason implied and enacted in the project of anthropology itself. The entire hermeneutic wager of his work is, after all, that he will be able to demonstrate the "thought" behind the matter of human ritual, and therefore Frazer is committed for the sake of his own enterprise to the separability of thought from language and representative action, to the belief that the material of primitive ritual is preceded and governed by an intentional structure which may be made visible and intelligible by his own science. In this sense the intentional structure of the life of primitive (magical) man is the guarantee and counterpart of the intentional structure of *The Golden Bough* itself. In fact, in the sense that the "meaning" of primitive ritual is the same as the "meaning" of *The Golden Bough*, the intentional structures are rigorously identical.

We may read the significance of this in wider terms than the strictly anthropological. Despite its attempts to represent itself as disinterested and rational inquiry, Frazer's work, along with all of the anthropological theory of the nineteenth century, is bound into a complex set of

relationships to its imperial context. It is not so much that anthropology simply made itself available for colonial and racist applications – although, of course, it did, in quite thoroughgoing ways – as that its very struggle to identify and legitimate itself, its object of inquiry and its modes of functioning, asymmetrically relates to and recapitulates the ways in which white, European, patriarchal capitalism dealt with the challenge to its self-identity posed by contact with alien cultures during the imperial expansion of the nineteenth century. This process involves more than mere egoism or domination; characteristically it also includes uneasy self-projections and self-redefinitions as well, along with a paranoid compound of disavowal of and identification with the cultures that make up the feared/desired Other. In the case of *The Golden Bough*, we can say that the struggle to protect a history of mind separate from the history of material practices is a projection into the work itself of the structure of intellectual power involved in the practice of anthropology. Anthropology, itself a subject whose establishment as a discipline and rationalisation as a profession only took place definitively during Frazer's lifetime, here designates and struggles with its own claims to interpretative authority over the cultural materials that are its object. The problem of the self-reflexivity of anthropology, the fact that its own activities of observation and interpretation are themselves actions which are part of human social history and themselves may therefore legitimately be considered material for anthropological inquiry, is one that has emerged openly only in the later years of the twentieth century; but it is a problem whose unacknowledged pressure nevertheless shapes anthropological argument of earlier periods.

In the case of *The Golden Bough*, the claim to hermeneutic authority is evidenced in its most marked formal feature, the rigid separation of its theory from its evidence. As is well known, the principal theoretical claims of *The Golden Bough* had all been elaborated by the Second Edition, with the development of the theory of the three stages of human development, and the outlining of the theme of the killing of the king. All the detail which is loaded into the complete twelve-volume edition of 1906–15 is intended simply as further exemplification; and it is striking that, when Frazer came to add a thirteenth volume as an "aftermath" to the complete volume, it consisted of nothing more than extra examples, to be slotted in at the appropriate points of the argument. The structure of the work is therefore simultaneously closed and open, for it appears to be able to tolerate infinite internal expansion without ever losing organic completeness.

But there is another, countervailing force in *The Golden Bough*, which

is the force of particularity itself. As any reader would testify, it is a work in which the flood of examples always threatens to swell beyond the control of the narrative. It is obviously this feature of the work which has meant that it has had so much influence among non-professional, and especially literary, readers, who have been able in various ways to refigure its evidential material and thematics without reference to its governing theory. The ambition of *The Golden Bough* is to show how all its evidential matter may be transmuted back into the operations of mind, but its anxiety is that mind may in the end come to exist only on its complex forms of entanglement with matter.

We may turn a last time to Marett's *The Birth of Humility* for help on this matter. Marett's central concern in that essay is with psychological experiences of negativity, loss or self-abasement, all of them forms of "humility" which belong to all periods of primitive life, even the magical stage which he says Frazer has characterised as one of "haughty self-sufficiency and arrogance".[34] In a sense, Marett is only substituting for Frazer's primitive philosopher another familiar image, that of the craven, ignorant savage, who retires every night in dread that the sun will never rise again. However, at a deeper level, and by association, Marett seems also to be impugning the basis of Frazer's own scientific knowledge. In a stinging passage he suggests not only that magic is characterised much more by the experience of "humility" than by the sort of interpretative command imagined by Frazer, but that science should be as well:

> If Science were indeed but another sort of Magic that just happened to work, then presumably the "haughty self-sufficiency" of the old Magic would survive, justified after a fashion perhaps, but certainly in no way diminished by success. Happily it is far otherwise with the spirit of true Science – that spirit which breathes in Bacon's phrase *Homo Naturae Minister.*[35]

The complex charge which this passage so gently levels is that Frazer's science may be more like his postulated magic – in its lack of humility – than it would wish to allow. In fact the entire debate between Frazer and Marett has as a powerful undercurrent this self-reflexive relation between magic and science, and the anxiety of definition instanced by Frazer here comes partly from the struggle for possession of the definition of anthropology itself.

In fact, it is clear that both a haughty will-to-truth and an odd kind of humility are present throughout *The Golden Bough*, a book which is itself a startling example of the process by which reason is produced in

action and instance, rather than existing as a separate and originating force. For all his rationalism, Frazer was often very sceptical about the absolute or necessary dominion of science (see, for example, his final disclaimer at the end of *The Golden Bough*[36]), and was, in an obvious sense, as much a *bricoleur* as Claude Lévi-Strauss. *The Golden Bough* fluctuates between the centripetal desire to consolidate, organise and simplify, and the centrifugal force of the data, which keep threatening to spin out of conceptual control.

The fear, but also the motivation, behind *The Golden Bough* is that reason may in the end prove not to be absolutely different from mythology, and a passage from the Preface to the Abridged Edition encapsulates this in a useful way. Frazer is replying to those who have attributed to him a belief in the primacy of tree-worship, and states plainly that he considers the reverence for trees to have only very minor significance in the evolution of religion. The sentences that follow are wearily irascible:

> I hope that after this explicit disclaimer I shall no longer be taxed with embracing a system of mythology which I look upon not merely as false but as preposterous and absurd. But I am too familiar with the hydra of error to expect that by lopping off one of the monster's heads I can prevent another, or even the same, from sprouting again.[37]

Frazer here disclaims an interpretation of mythology in terms which make it sound as though he has in fact succumbed to that mythological belief, rather than a belief in its existence; to "embrace" a system of mythology is a bit like embracing a faith, and there is a striking ambiguity in the word "system", which can be both a set of beliefs and an interpretation of those beliefs. The persistence of the mythology through Frazer's disclaimer is wonderfully (and perhaps with conscious irony) confirmed in the vegetal, if not arboreal, metaphor of the hydra. A hydra is of course a serpent, not a tree or a plant, but here its heads "sprout", the metaphor confirming the hypothesis which Frazer wants to deny. So, in lamenting the persistence and tenacity of error, Frazer allows his metaphor to be conditioned by exactly the error he is trying to defend against – the universality of tree-worship – thereby enacting as well as repudiating the persistence of the error. One final complexity may be noticed in this small example. Frazer is here not disputing a theory as such, but rather defending himself against the attribution of a theory to him; his opponent here is not a rival theory, but a rival account of what his own theory is. (Frazer was rarely drawn into public dispute, but,

when he was, it was often in such terms as these.) The struggle here is a complex one, in which the fertile monster of mythology is both outside and inside Frazer's own work – outside in that the attribution comes from others, inside in that the theory of tree-worship is being taken as emanating from him. Mythology is here an antagonist whose tactics and position one can evidently never be quite sure of, and, as we have seen, for the anthropologist to disavow mythology may always be in some sense to embrace it.

NOTES

1. Ackerman, p. 233.
2. Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (London, 1871), I, 285.
3. Andrew Lang, *Custom and Myth*, 2nd edn (London, 1893), p. 23.
4. Ibid., pp. 24–5.
5. F. Max Müller, "Comparative Mythology", *Oxford Essays* (London, 1856), pp. 1–87, and "Modern Mythology", *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2nd ser. (London, 1864), pp. 525–80.
6. Letter held in the Frazer collection of Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. MS c.30.45, quoted in Ackerman, pp. 88–9.
7. R. R. Marett, *The Birth of Humility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 13.
8. Quoted in Ackerman, p. 226.
9. F. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 1st ser. (London, 1861), p. 439.
10. Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2nd ser., p. 525.
11. Ackerman, pp. 231–2.
12. Perhaps Frazer's most emphatic statement on this score is to be found in the Third Edition, where he writes, "We shall probably not err in assuming that many myths, which we know only as myths, had once their counterpart in magic; in other words, that they used to be acted as a means of producing in fact the events which they describe in figurative language. Ceremonies often die out while myths survive, and thus we are left to infer the dead ceremony from the living myth" (*GB 3*, IX, 374). See also *GB 3*, II, 142–3.
13. *GB A*, pp. 350, 394.
14. *GB A*, p. 7.
15. *GB A*, pp. 382, 395, 385.
16. Quoted in Ackerman, p. 89.
17. *GB A*, p. 324.
18. *GB A*, p. 49.
19. *GB A*, p. 92.
20. *GB 1*, I, 31.
21. *GB 2*, I, 78.
22. *GB A*, p. 325.
23. See, for example, Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious*

Life: A Study in Religious Sociology, tr. Joseph Ward Swain (London: Allen and Unwin, 1915); and the account in Robert Ackerman, "Frazer on Myth and Ritual", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), 115–36.

24. Quoted in Ackerman, pp. 226–7.
25. On the "logic of supplementation", see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 141–64. I specify the degeneratist argument as exemplifying only one side of the supplementary effect, since, of course, Derrida's argument is that it simultaneously confirms and jeopardises the distinction between original and supplement.
26. Ackerman, p. 228.
27. Marett, *The Birth of Humility*, p. 5.
28. *GB A*, pp. 391–2.
29. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in *The Standard Edition of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, tr. James Strachey, XVIII (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 14–17.
30. Marett, *The Birth of Humility*, p. 12.
31. Ibid., p. 27.
32. Ibid.
33. *GB A*, pp. 324–5.
34. Marett, *The Birth of Humility*, p. 8.
35. Ibid., p. 10.
36. *GB 3*, XI, 306.
37. *GB A*, p. 7.

V

A TOUR OF BABEL: FRAZER AND THEORIES OF LANGUAGE

David Richards

WITTGENSTEIN compared the interest in ancient rites and customs largely fostered by *The Golden Bough* to the Victorian passion for building follies and ruins[1] – the frisson of the archaic, glimpsed in the broken fragments of ancient texts. *The Golden Bough* has the substance of a Victorian dream. Its materials are, perforce, incomplete, since the project never will nor can be finished. Its narratives are violent, often sexy, given the sealing grace of the prehistoric distance of the uncivilised. The text's fragments of ethnography of contemporary "primitives" (for there are no "social wholes" in *The Golden Bough*) renders all its subjects beyond the scope of history, and by discarding history promulgates the Victorian desire for the liberating agency of timelessness. *The Golden Bough* is that "Other" of the Victorian imagination as it struggles to free itself from too much history by reconstructing its remote past in speculative reformulations of human evolution. Its secret agenda is to make better versions of historical narratives; this is evident in its insistence upon the undifferentiated nature of its cultural materials, almost as if what is known of the past is irrelevant to the text's procedures. Its landscape is an exotic medley of human cultural traces, follies and ruins.

The whole is given an added zest and urgency, for the prognosis did not look hopeful for its primitive subjects. As a consequence of "the superiority of European culture and language", the primitive and with him the primitive tongues were doomed to extinction. Frazer repeatedly urged the collection of data from the primitive communities of the world before "history" caught up with them and they were swallowed by European civilisation. Frazer was, at least, ambivalent on this matter. On the one hand there is the familiar Rousseauesque plangency which has invested anthropology with its reputation as a critique of modernity; on the other is the open acceptance of the necessary and inevitable demise of primitive error. Renan, described by Frazer as "un grand homme au sommet de sa renommée littéraire", conjures the mood of equivocation:

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

"Oh let these last sons of nature die out in their mothers lap; do not interrupt, with your austere dogmas the fruit of twenty centuries of reflection, their childish games, their moonlight dances, their sweet though ephemeral raptures."[2] This sense of Rousseauesque noble savagery cut across by the dictates of evolution – the sense, both mournful and celebratory, of an original organic wholeness necessarily split asunder by the evolution of human mental capacities – lies at the heart of much speculation about primitive cultures. Renan's prose seems mythopoeic in its evocation of the myth of the Fall. Indeed, the ejection of original man from Paradise is deeply inscribed in Victorian anthropological writings. Contemporary primitives offered Frazer and his contemporaries the opportunity to ask again some ancient questions: not least, what language did Adam speak in Eden; in what tongue did he discourse with angels? Of course, the problem was never posed in that way, but it was, at root, the essential question.

Frazer's biographer Robert Ackerman claims that the question which constitutes the real subject of *The Golden Bough* was the same as that which had exercised comparative philologists throughout the nineteenth century: "the nature of the primitive religion of the Aryans".[3] In attempting to see how theories of the origin of language shaped and determined Frazer's project, I shall take the ubiquitous influence of evolution as my starting-point. I shall summarise and discuss the salient features of philologists' reconstructions of Aryan culture and suggest what Frazer may have taken from the debate. Further, I shall argue that philology and anthropology share a common ancestry in eighteenth-century rationalism. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to attempt to situate *The Golden Bough*, the most extensive discussion of primitive belief in the nineteenth century, alongside the equally rich and extensive field of linguistic speculation. I shall suggest that lending a context of contemporary theories of language to Frazer enables us to view *The Golden Bough* as congruent with the theories generated by philological research into the Indo-European *Ursprache*, and beyond that to Enlightenment rationalism, from which both linguistics and anthropology spring.

But this is, in a sense, merely to revitalise an alternative myth of origins, this time with Frazer as the originating subject. It also recapitulates the evolutionists' error of eliding two distinct and separate questions: in attempting to answer the question of origins it substitutes the "how?" of influence for the "why?" Evolutionists could be criticised for having, under the presence of explaining *why* certain forms evolved, substituted an explanation of *how* they evolved. Frazer is as culpable in this respect as any of his contemporaries. The truly interesting question, therefore,

is not so much *how* Frazer responded to speculations on the origin of language as *why* he responded as he did. What angelic discourse did the primitive religion of the Aryans hold for him? Why were these ruins and follies significant?

I shall argue that a possible answer may be found in linguistics and that, in many essential features, Frazer pre-empted the next phase in the history of the fruitful interrelationship of linguistics and anthropology by presenting, in terms consonant with his own project, a prototype for the central tenets of modern structural linguistics. In other words, the significance of "the primitive religion of the Aryans" lay in the angelic discourse of the deep structures of the human mind.

The Aryans were, essentially, the construction of philologists, who posited an originating source for all Indo-European languages in a remote and barbaric past. The Aryans were an immensely potent source of speculation since to trace their presence in language, religion or "manners" was to achieve a glimpse of the original spring of humanity. For believers, the Aryans were to the nineteenth century what Plato's theory of forms was to the Renaissance – the *idea* from which everything descends and which everything imitates. For the cynical, as Mallory remarks, the Aryans rapidly assumed a ludicrous aspect as "the phlogiston of prehistoric research".[4]

The Aryan controversy took two principal directions. The first and by far most popular area of debate lay in the direction of attempting to "place" the Aryans. In attempting to "discover" the homeland of the original Aryan peoples, it became a matter of national honour to lay claim to such a pedigree. As the claims of ownership of the Aryans became more extravagant, national pride gave way to racial preferences; skull measurements, perceived racial qualities, the aesthetics of race muddied the theory of the monogenesis and diffusion of languages. The biblical notion of one originating tongue is, of course, a Hebraic myth adopted by the early Christian Fathers, then challenged in the eighteenth century. Once the Enlightenment had cut the restraints of fidelity to biblical accounts and Hebraic supremacy, a deluge of competing claims to primacy, which J. P. Mallory has impressively catalogued, were generated over a 150–year period leading up to and beyond *The Golden Bough*.

In 1767 James Parsons argued that Irish was the "last remnant" of the ancient tongue, but he squared himself with the biblical account by having Shem speak Hebrew and Japhet Magogian (Irish). William Jones in 1786 shifted the terms of the debate somewhat by supplying not only an original tongue, Sanskrit, but also an original homeland for the Aryans,

India. Theories of the original speech and homeland followed thick and fast. Schlegel agreed with Jones. In 1816 Bopp argued that Greek and Latin were not derived from Sanskrit but that all three were derived from one prior language. In 1813 Thomas Young introduced the term "Indo-European" into the debate. Wilhelm Koppens in the mid-1830s argued for an Aryan homeland in west Turkestan. August Schleicher, in 1852, placed it by the Caspian Sea – indeed, in an excess of zeal he even composed a fable in reconstructed Indo-European. In 1859 Ernest Renan situated the homeland in Central Asia, on the Pamir Plateau, while in the following year Adolphe Pictet, using the term "paléontologie linguistique", located it in Bactria and even ventured a physical description of the "beauty of Aryan bloodlines and the superiority of their intelligence". Rask placed all European languages under the label "Thracian" and plumped for a common homeland between Asia Minor and the Pannonian Plain. Albert Pike (1873) also expressed a belief in Aryan racial superiority and, basing his argument on astronomical observations of the so-called Indic Asruns, situated the homeland in Sogdiana in 10,000 BC. Onwards and upwards: in 1886 Penka suggested that the Aryans were long-headed, blond Scandinavians; in 1889 Jubainville revisited Asia, this time the Oxus river basin; the following year, T. H. Huxley pushed the homeland back to a 1500-mile area from the Urals to the North Sea. At about the same time, Schrader's south-Russian theory became known in England, and Taylor was arguing that the Aryans were an improved race of Finns. By 1902 Kossinna had settled simply for a southward movement of Northern cultures. But by far the most appealing theory is that of Tilak, an Indian scholar and friend of Gandhi's, who suggested the North Pole as the Aryan homeland following survivals in ancient Vedic and Iranian cosmologies.[5] In view of all this speculation, it is hardly surprising that in 1911 the Linguistic Society of Paris reaffirmed its constitutional ban on papers dealing with the origin and development of language.[6]

If these manifold theories were not so deeply implicated in the formation of doctrines of racial superiority and the biologising of history – in other words, the formation of fascist myths of heredity – they would appear merely comic. It is to Frazer's credit that he refused to allow his researches to become embroiled in the heightening of European racial tension fuelled by the excesses of the Aryan debate, but few actually spoke out against it. Max Müller's opposition, in 1872, to the relating of linguistic and ethnological research is striking for its uniqueness: "There are Aryan and Semitic languages, but it is against all rules of logic to speak, without an expressed or implied qualification, of an Aryan race,

of Aryan blood, of Aryan skulls, and to attempt ethnological classification on purely linguistic grounds."[7] Müller's solitary outcry seems like common sense in its pleading for the term "Aryan" to be viewed in its strictly linguistic sense.

Yet, out of philologists' speculative reconstructions of the Aryan language emerged a second branch of evolutionary conjectures about primitive religion, economy, manners, beliefs and customs. The value of the Aryan debate to Frazer lay not in its eventual findings but in the amount of information it generated and how it ordered that material. Those committed to the discovery of an Aryan homeland used, of course, linguistic evidence, but they also discussed the contemporary languages of those people inhabiting the region, together with an eclectic range of extra-linguistic evidence: myths, legends, folktales, material culture, geographical details, astronomical and astrological findings, research into ancient and often esoteric texts and much else. Although Frazer had no use for their ultimate conclusions, the accumulation over one and a half centuries of a vast repository of exotic "facts" required just the kind of synthesising skills Frazer pre-eminently possessed. Implicit within the accumulation of all this data, however, were methodological innovations which Frazer could rightly regard as being consonant with Tylorian anthropological method: the identification of the salient cultural categories of myth, ritual, evolution. Taken as a body, the information represented a massive exercise in the comparative method essential to anthropological theorising as it was conceived in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, the very nature of linguistic research in this area lay in the uncovering of "traces" of the *Ursprache* and subsequent speculations about Aryan cultural practices detectable in contemporary societies. This search for traces is reflected in the central element of Tylorian anthropology as "survivals": the idea that "ancient" or "primitive" customs survive in the cultural practices of the contemporary peasantry and proletariat. The philologists could claim, with considerable justification, to have practised a linguistic theory of survivals long before Tylor.

The philologists' claim to be at the forefront of innovation in evolutionary theory can be taken further than the matter of methodology. Indeed, Max Müller claimed in 1887 that he was a "Darwinian long before Darwin". "No student of the science of language can be anything but an evolutionist, for, wherever he looks, he sees nothing but evolution going on around him."[8] There is justice in Müller's complaint that the historians and theoreticians of language deserved a place alongside the biologists, botanists and geologists regarded as Darwin's forebears. Frazer discovered in the philologists not only storehouses of precious facts, nor simply a

confirmation of methodological correctness, but claims upon the original myth of origins: evolution itself.

The researches of philologists working in the area of the origin of language had a further significance for Frazer in confirming the abstract classification system he devised for his material. Frazer's classification of the evolutionary progress of mankind through the stages of magic, religion and science – the major theoretical innovation of the Second Edition – has been correctly assumed to have been derived from Comte's "Law of the Three Stages", which were in their turn derived from a mixture of the stadial social theories of the Scottish and European Enlightenment. Frazer seems almost to have grafted his own evolutionary taxonomy of magic–religion–science onto Comte's trinity of theology, metaphyisics and science. Similarly, Renan, to whom Frazer owes an acknowledged debt at least as great as that owed to Comte, offers a more ample but syllogistic set of permutations on the classical theme of the Ages of Iron, Brass and Gold, whereby the first age is religious but unscientific, the second is scientific but unreligious, and the third both scientific and religious.

But trinitarian schemes of development seem to have been in vogue throughout the nineteenth century, almost as if the evolutionists sought mythical solutions to the problem of myth. The evolutionists seem to beg the question as to whether anyone can really believe a myth which does not have three parts, Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Paradise, Fall and Redemption? Can anyone really lend credence to a theory which is not composed of thesis, antithesis and synthesis? Is it possible for a theory of, let us say, eleven non-oppositional elements to gain wide acceptance? Or is the trinitarian design *the* significant talisman of these evolutionary schemes? The facts, details, theories, scholarship are simply and purely subservient drones working to enunciate this secret but ubiquitous code. Certainly a brief survey of philologists' trinitarian evolutionary schemes would yield rivals enough to Comte and Renan as influences on Frazer, but they were rarely unembellished metaphors of the tripartite evolution of language.

J. G. Herder, for example, developed his own trinitarian pattern for the development of language, linking it in turn to the metaphor of the human life cycle of youth, maturity and old age. Each of these linguistic-*cum*-human ages corresponded respectively to the discourses of poetry, politics and science.[9] But the metaphors run riot as they spread their tentacular roots throughout human cultural history, for, just as languages and men grow to maturity, so nations, families, nature itself, grow from weakness to strength to excellence before withering and dying. In the

face of such rampant natural power, the human agency is powerless to influence the burgeoning Romantic metaphors. Language is a force of nature obeying its own laws of change; poor humanity is merely its agent.

The German philologist Schleicher takes his cue from Herder, since for him also languages are "organisms of nature" which evolve independently, diminishing the human role simply to that of observer of a natural phenomenon. In progressing from the sub-human to the human level, man moves from an evolutionary phase to a historical phase. It is at the point of entry into the historical phase that human language attains its highest level of perfection and can develop no further, but only undergo degeneration from this moment of perfection. Romantic metaphors of nature drive the discussion as language is seen to bud and blossom: any specific social or cultural context is undercut by the radical historylessness of nature's cyclical time. In a way which is reminiscent of Frazer's separation of magic and science, upon which is loaded the wider division of primitive and civilised, Schleicher proposes that, the more "active" a "people" has been in the historical era, the more the original language has been worn away. Thus English has been more involved in the process of history than Icelandic and has therefore preserved its original form less well; similarly for Hebrew as opposed to Arabic, Greek as opposed to Sanskrit, and so on. The whole pattern of binary oppositions is given a moral quality, for, the less eroded by history, the more integrity the language possesses. Consequently Lithuanian has the greatest integrity of all European languages. Languages are, therefore, composed on a graph which describes a partial sine curve: originating in sub-language, ascending to the evolution and rapid perfection of language, then degenerating with the language's involvement with history.[10]

Of course, the relative integrity of languages contains a further subtext: that integrity is bought at the cost of political and economic backwardness. "History" is unconsciously defined in a very Frazerian way as participation in Victorian technological and imperial culture, and in a way which goes to the centre of Victorian anthropological assumptions. When Schleicher and other philologists write of the relative "integrity" of languages untouched by history, or when Frazer makes a distinction between myth and science, they are acknowledging the primary role of anthropology to construct a discipline where there shall be, in Tylor's phrase, "scarce a hand's breadth between an English ploughman and a negro of Central Africa". In defining the linguistic or anthropological subject they define "Otherness" as that which is "mythical", "magical", "natural", "historyless" or "having integrity", in Romantic metaphors which obscure their true meaning of "colonised", "proletarian", "peasant",

"powerless" or "foreign".

Frazer's distinction between myth and history should be noted in this context, since myth, being a phase of man's evolution, is surpassed by history, which reflects man's self-conscious later phase. Similarly, magic is more primitive than religion, Frazer argues, because aborigines practise magic but not religion, because animals associate through contiguity and similarity, and because magical beliefs are still to be found among the European peasantry and proletariat.[11] All of this goes to prove that myth, like magic, is one tremendous human error. "Myths", he wrote in his translation of Apollodorus, "are mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature."[12] But Frazer's euhemerism belies a further, more important theme which runs throughout *The Golden Bough*: that myth, as a mistake made by all humanity, provides us with general truths. To find these one must dig beneath the surface of error. Behind myth lay magic for, as Frazer wrote in *Balder the Beautiful*, "myth stood to magic in the relation of theory to practice".[13] But if myth is error it follows that so too is magic. Evans-Pritchard, for one, finds it hard to comprehend how Frazer could possibly have conceived of a world founded on error: "If primitive man really mistook an ideal connection for a real one and confused subjective with objective experience, his life would be chaos. He could not exist . . . ."[14] Since primitive man does not live in chaos, Frazer must be wrong: magic is not error but difference. Beattie makes much the same point, although less tactfully:

> Nobody in their senses could possibly believe that all things that share some common quality, and all things that have once been in contact, are continually affecting one another: in a world so conceived almost everything would all the time be affecting almost everything else, and all would be chaos.[15]

Beattie omits to mention that Frazer is careful to point to the necessity for human action, ritual, to bring about magical activity: that the latent connectedness of the world lies inert until vitalised by human agency. But, even so, Frazer's critics seem to have a point. To paraphrase a frequent criticism, what is remarkable about Frazer's analysis of magic is not that he saw it as error, but that once in error anyone was ever capable of thinking his way out of it.

But Frazer's critics, justified though their objections may be, are asking of him questions which his work does not set out to answer. The trajectory of his thinking is inward, to origins, Aryan or otherwise, and not outwards,

to a social life as it is really lived. A more serious charge can be levelled, however, at the very nature of the evolutionists' project. In various forms, the world begins in its Aryan roots, in poetry, but ascends to philosophy. Yet nowhere in Frazer's writings, or in the writings of the philologists, is the process of change attributed to anything other than the divine agency of evolution. What revolution or *rite de passage* brought humanity from one state of linguistic and cultural awareness to the next? Again, the question of "essence", the essential driving-force of evolution, is elided, and "origins" – constructed in terms of "Otherness" – are substituted for "change". In attempting to account for transformation, the evolutionists discovered only the stasis of origins.

This tendency is particularly marked among the least adept philological evolutionists, as Hilary Henson has indicated in the case of Payne and Hyde Clark. Payne attempted to differentiate between European and primitive languages according to the absence or presence of the holophrase or portmanteau word: "Holophrastic languages did not analyse and structure experience in the way that the European languages could: instead they merely gave general, undifferentiated impressions." Hyde Clark, for his part, placed languages and cultures on a "scale of progressive civilization", in which Bushmen and Inuit (Eskimoes) were linked under the ludicrous heading of Polar-Pygmean. Both Sayce and Tylor rather patiently pointed out that "society implies language, race does not",[16] but Frazer is hardly free from such excesses. Given the easy commerce between anthropology and language studies, it is not a long way from Payne's distinction between holophrastic and European to Frazer's division between magic and science. Nor does Frazer escape from Hyde Clark's tendency to yoke culturally diverse peoples – the Maoris and the Hurons, say – often in the same sentence. In 1880 Sayce correctly diagnosed the condition when he wrote in his *Introduction to the Science of Language* that "The spirit of vanity has invaded the science of language itself. We have come to think that not only is the race to which we belong superior to all others, but that the languages we speak are equally superior."[17]

All the evolutionists, Frazer included, seem to acknowledge that the evolution of language has involved a progressive growth of complexity – which is as much as to say that both philology and anthropology, being complex disciplines indicative of a higher level of cultural evolution, can only be written in "advanced" languages. Languages and cultures which have not passed beyond a certain evolutionary level, an epistemological level, are not capable of the complexity required for reflection. Thus Schelling links each stage of human development with a parallel stage in

the development of language, from the monosyllabic to the disyllabic and finally to polysyllabic complexity. Again the metaphor finds further applications in mankind's religious development from an original monotheism through successive stages of duotheism and polytheism to the absolute monotheism of revelation.[18] Comte offers a refinement to this scheme by pinning states of language development to stages of evolution. Language originates in the theological stage, in myths, images and poetry. It then develops a capacity for abstraction during the metaphysical era, while in the present scientific phase its condition is, as yet, undetermined.[19] By such means the philological and anthropological project created a discourse fundamentally marked by exclusivity. The commonwealth of letters was seen to be inhabited entirely by highly evolved Victorian gentlemen possessed of a "polysyllabic" language.

Frazer should, of course, be viewed in his context, and his formulations are neither more nor less outrageous than those of either his contemporaries or his predecessors. All of them held an "implicit assumption that linguistic distribution and interrelations exactly paralleled those of race and could be thus used as a proof for the latter where other evidence was lacking".[20] Max Müller called this a "method of making language itself tell the history of ancient times". Although Frazer disagreed with many of the detailed findings of contemporary research, he none the less agreed with the general assumptions of the debate: the essentially eighteenth-century notion that the evolutionary progress of mankind is mirrored in the visible transformations of language. Language study is anthropology in miniature.

Marett criticised *The Golden Bough*, with some justice, as "a Platonic myth". Undoubtedly, the central themes of that myth, Frazer's unilinear scheme of development of human thought through stratified grades, represented an extreme reduction, but it should be said in mitigation that all unilinear evolutionary schemes presuppose an originary state. For Frazer this origin was to be found in a triangulation of animal mentality, aboriginal practice and proletarian custom. But what of the terminus of evolution – where and towards what is the Platonic myth taking us? If the high-water mark of human capacities is represented by science, what precisely does Frazer mean by "science"?

Rather like Marx's view of the truly socialist society, the Frazerian notion of science is more inferred than declared. In his notebooks, Frazer thought of the various sciences as being, in Comtean fashion, arranged hierarchically on a ladder of ascending comprehensiveness. Frazer's notion of the Platonic goal of science envisages an end to inquiry in closure rather than an enabling of science to ask further questions. He

wrote, "Science will be complete, when the data of each special science are fully explained by the science next below it in complexity, so that the whole series of special sciences shall run into each other without any gap."[21] The seamless garment of science accomplishes its goal of finality by arranging its data-filled compartments in systems of domination; master disciplines aided by slave specialisms. Theories of the history of language, philology and linguistics are submitted to the scrutiny of comparative anthropology with its "higher complexity" and capacity for absorption. However one may recoil from this image of ingested closure, it is an appropriate description of Frazer's method; the wholesale accommodation of vast numbers of "facts", many of which, implicitly if not explicitly, have their origins in language studies.

Frazer wrote that "We start from a general idea consisting of a very few qualities, and proceed downwards through genera, sub-genera, species, sub-species, etc., at every step adding to the number of diverse qualities."[22] As an inversion of inductive method, this would seem to be the opposite of scientific procedure. It approaches mostly closely what Johannes Fabian has called "taxonomic rewriting":

> Taxonomic rewriting is never just a purely contemplative, aesthetic game of reducing messy data to elegant models . . . the player is out to win. Winning the taxonomic game consists of demonstrating synchronic relations of order beneath the flux and confusion of historical events and the expressions of personal experience.[23]

To "rewrite" cultural materials "taxonomically" Frazer recasts primitive cultures into shapes and figures of difference, the purpose of which is to reorient the peoples of the world as spokes around the central hub of Western society. The cultures of others are thereby rendered as a spectacle surveyed and dominated by the viewing taxonomist. As a result, the world is radically simplified. In the search for taxonomic truth, the exotic is reduced to the common, the mundane.

The purpose of Frazer's "completed science" seems to be surveillance, control and domination. "Science" is power; it occupies the same role and position, analogically, as the "polysyllabic" tongues of the philologists; both are discourses which gather together, analyse, reflect upon and legislate for the discourses of their client "special sciences" or subordinate tongues.

Frazer shared the common contention that primitive peoples were subject to whimsy and incapable of making conscious distinctions between natural and supernatural phenomena. They were subject to unpredictable

turns of events which they neither understood nor controlled. Their languages did not have the capacity for abstract generalisation, since they possessed neither the conceptual capacity nor the vocabulary for subtle distinctions. As Payne wrote in 1899, primitive language was "slippery and unstable as a dream".[24] Primitive languages and subordinate sciences required the discipline of superior discourses. Slippery instability was anathema to Frazer as much as it was to his contemporaries. It smacked too much of anarchy; at all costs, some form of order had to be wrung from the data.

The forms of order of completed science as demonstrated by Frazer's own work, however, offer us an insight into the next historical phase of the fruitful relationship between linguistics and anthropology. Moving beyond speculations of "origins", *The Golden Bough* can be seen as a bridge between, on the one hand, the Victorian world of the evolutionists and the attendant Aryan linguistic debate, and, on the other, twentieth-century anthropology, with its indebtedness to structural linguistics.

Frazer would, of course, have been uncomprehending of any assertion that *The Golden Bough* in any of its editions was an extended exercise in structuralist method. He would perhaps have pointed to Lord Raglan's essay "The Hero of Tradition" as a justification for his synthesising method. He would most certainly have cited the typological methods of medieval and Renaissance biblical scholars as a primary influence. Typology was the process by which biblical scholars elucidated correspondences between the Old and New Testament. Their purpose was to prove that the New Testament retold stories prefigured in the Old. Correspondences were found by reducing the narratives of each text to their nuclei; nodal points of indispensible action without which the story could not be told. This form of literary criticism lies at the heart of much of Frazer's treatment of myth. For the purposes of comparison diverse narratives are reduced to their nuclei and generalisations are drawn from the correspondences so produced. The narrative of the priest of Diana at Nemi which frames *The Golden Bough* is just such a typological exercise exploded to encompass dozens of cultures, hundreds of myths and thousands of pages – a typological exercise lengthy even by the standards of nineteenth-century biblical scholarship. The method is almost precisely that employed by later structuralist analysis, except that in terms of sheer bulk of data so treated *The Golden Bough* makes Lévi-Strauss's efforts seem marginal.

My contention is that structuralism in its method and procedures and in the scope of its ambition represents the master science, the completed science, which Frazer predicted in his notebooks; both use a typological

method to control and process data; both are oriented around a central informing theory. In my view, the source of that theory is the same both for Frazer and for structural linguistics and its progeny, structural anthropology, and it is this source which provides us with the "why?" of *The Golden Bough*; its angelic discourse.

It is in the chapter on sympathetic magic added to the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* that Frazer identifies the truth that he believes the error of magic enshrines. Magic, the earliest phase in the development of human thought, functions through a law of sympathy divided into two consituents; the law of similarity (homoeopathic magic) and the law of contact (contagious magic).

> Thus far we have been considering chiefly that branch of sympathetic magic which may be called homoeopathic or imitative. Its leading principle, as we have seen, is that like produces like, or, in other words, that an effect resembles its cause. The other great branch of sympathetic magic, which I have called Contagious Magic, proceeds upon the notion that things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards, even when quite dissevered from each other, in such a sympathetic relation that whatever is done to the one must similarly affect the other.[25]

These are the invariable laws not only of magical thought, but of all thought, science differing from magic only in its greater efficacy, its freedom from error. Fundamental to magic, therefore, is the need to know the secret nature of a thing if that thing is to be coerced. The nature of a thing, in true evolutionary style, is known by its origins, how it is caused to exist.

This further trinity of similarity, contact and causation is the element of truth contained in the error of magic. Frazer's identification of the principal cognitive structures of the human mind send us back to the eighteenth century, to the writings of David Hume: "The qualities, from which this association arises, and by which the mind is after this manner conveyed from one idea to another, are three, viz. *resemblance*, *contiguity* in time or place, and *cause and effect*."[26] Indeed, the whole of *The Golden Bough* can be seen as a reworking of Humean theories. The data of primitive peoples are associated through resemblance or contiguity into significant patterns linked by evolutionary chains of cause and effect. It is hardly surprising, then, that, when Anatole France reviewed *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, he wrote, of Frazer's work as a whole that "what Montesquieu was in his day Frazer is in ours and the difference

in their works shows the progress of ideas",[27] so apparent seemed the Enlightenment tendency of Frazer's intellect.

But Frazer's casting of magic in the mould of Humean cognitive theory is suggestive not just of the eighteenth century but also of Frazer's great contemporary in structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure. What the theory of magic was to Frazer, with his Humean distinction between similarity and contiguity, the principles of linguistics were to Saussure, with syntagmatic and associative relations corresponding to Hume's. The comparison lies in the shared assumptions about the processes of mental association. The laws of similarity and contiguity are as apparent in Frazer's theories of magic as in Saussure's theories of language. For magic as for language the laws of association operate not simply to collect data (magical practices or words), but also to organise them in interrelated units forming families, systems, types (generic myths or magical actions; syntagmatic strings or paradigmatic relations). Similarly, language (for Saussure) and magic (for Frazer) contain comparable forms of structural order, whereby language and myths only become truly significant when the mythical or linguistic elements are composed within a system of myths or language. The true significance of a myth can only be seen in relation to other myths; words only signify in relation to other words. For Frazer, as for Saussure, it is the *system* which is significant, not the component parts. Frazer's primitive magician, like Saussure's practitioner of language, gives expression to a perpetually repeated message: the deep structures of the mental processes of association.

Critics of both Frazer and Saussure make remarkably similar complaints about their theoretical orientations. Both writers are said to lack the Humean notion of causation. Magic and language are derived from a social context as much as from mental procecesses. Furthermore, critics complain that as magic and language are the effects of social causes, Frazer's and Saussure's excision of causation eradicates innovation and change, and thus an entire social context containing important ideological values which have formed both magic *and* language. Their literary styles and use of evidence make Frazer and Saussure read very differently, but they have a common ancestry in Enlightenment grand theory. Moreover, their schemes for the fundamental structuring of human thought, and the fact that critics raise similar objections to both schemes, may suggest an indebtedness which is as surprising as it is unfashionable.

Koerner's biography of Saussure cites Pieter A. Verburg's widely adopted assertion that Saussure's contribution was "an almost Copernican Revolution in the study of language" in that it moved inquiry away from historical development and towards a synchronic view of language as an

arbitrary system of structural rules.[28] The danger with this is that, in promoting Saussure's reputation, it wrenches him out of his historical context and, by emphasising how much he differed from others, obscures how much he shared with his contemporaries, including Frazer. Koerner's biography shows, however, that Saussure was as concerned with "origins" as his contemporaries were. On this basis, therefore, there seem worthwhile grounds for drawing further comparisons, perhaps even to the point of attempting to trace a Frazerian influence on Saussure.

Saussure was only three years younger than Frazer, but the First Edition of *The Golden Bough* had been published some thirty years before his *Cours de linguistique générale* (given 1908–9, published 1915). A French translation of the important Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* followed almost immediately on the English original and, as a result, Frazer came to be held in high esteem in French-speaking countries, probably higher than in Britain. While Saussure was teaching his course in general linguistics he was also serving as a librarian of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences of the Sorbonne. As this was the period when Frazer's French reputation was growing, it seems inconceivable that Saussure was not at least aware of *The Golden Bough* and its central orientations. Critics favourable to Saussure have attempted to counter criticisms of his method by citing Saussure's reliance on sociological and anthropological authorities; his reiteration that language is not "complete in the individual but exists perfectly only in the *masse*". Joseph Vendreyes, a near-contemporary of Saussure, claims that Saussurean linguistics is essentially sociological. Witold Doroszewski states that Saussure's ideas possessed an extra-linguistic provenance, while F. P. Dineen maintains that Saussure's information came from outside linguistics and that his concept of synchrony was evolved only after reading Durkheim. In short, Koerner's biography has Saussure absorbing ideas about the social nature of language from a wide sociological and anthropological context.

Moreover, the transition from a diachronic study to a synchronic study of language was not the effect of an instant revelation, nor did he see the two as contradictory. In 1909, a year after he had given his famous *Cours*, Saussure still held that a knowledge of historical linguistics was an indispensable prerequisite of a study of synchronic linguistics. Indeed his historical studies of language far outweigh, in terms of quantity, his "synchronic" works. His first important article was on Indo-European and he described Bopp as his "master". At Leipzig he took courses in Slavonic, Lithuanian, Celtic, Sanskrit and the history of the German language. At Geneva he taught courses not only on general linguistics,

but on Sanskrit, Greek and Latin phonology, the history of the Indo-European verb, Greek dialects and inscriptions, Homer, Gothic, Germanic dialects and the ancient and modern linguistic geography of Europe. In this biographical context, then, Saussure begins to look less like a Copernican revolutionary and much more like a product of his times, concerned with the same eclectic intellectual issues of Aryanism, evolution and origins. The case for Frazer being a significant part of his intellectual baggage is further strengthened by Saussure's own research into Germanic legends and a very Frazerian project on the classical myths of Theseus and Orion and other "characters of antique mythology".

All the available biographical information on Saussure would indicate, therefore, that Saussure was turning over similar if not identical ideas to Frazer, and visiting the same authorities and planning similar projects. In searching for a controlling set of theoretical propositions, both writers discovered the same terminus in Hume. It is rather disheartening, then, to reverse the equation and to discover Frazer's virtual silence, in print, on the matter of language *per se*. Two essays – "The Language of Animals"[29] (a typically eclectic piece which isn't on the language of animals at all, but on folktales and myths of culture heroes who can speak with animals) and "A Suggestion as to the Origin of Gender in Languages" (*Fortnightly Review*, 1 January 1900) – plus numerous scattered references hardly amount to a total commitment to the subject.

Frazer's only extended exercise in comparative linguistics, and the only place where he enters into any kind of philological controversy, is the essay "A Suggestion as to the Origin of Gender in Language". Here he seems to be taking to task one of the assumptions generated by the Aryan debate, which was that the original Aryan tongue possessed grammatical gender.[30] This "discovery" had been invested with aesthetic "qualities" and taken as further evidence for the superiority of the Aryan. In his essay, however, Frazer demonstrates that gender is evident in other "savage" languages, such as that of the Caribs of Central America, who had exhibited few of the "qualities" of Aryan superiority. There may well be a sub-text to the essay whereby Frazer is using his data to undercut the racist fantasies of the Aryanists by an insistence on the facts of cultural diversity. So far so very good, but his own conclusions leave much to be desired: "Grammatical gender may have been at first purely subjective, that is indicative only of the sex of the speaker, and not at all intended to imply, as it was afterwards understood to imply, any sex in the thing spoken of." Frazer suggests that, in those languages which possess grammatical gender, two distinct dialects existed, one spoken by women the other spoken by men. Men would say *terrus*, women would

say *terra*, for example. This embodies a misconception which takes the notion of gender in language far too literally. Frazer commits the terrible blunder of taking gender to denote the sex of the speaker and not as indicating the conventions of linguistic analysis. Yet, even so, the essay, however mistaken, does attempt to relate language to the societies from which it draws its evidence. Unusually for Frazer, it makes a halting attempt to read back from linguistic evidence to society.

So much for the published works; the unpublished writings hold a much more intriguing clue to Frazer's linguistic speculations. At the back of one of his notebooks, which is half-filled with notes from Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law*, is the following passage in pencil. (Frazer's deletions are indicated by square brackets; parentheses indicate where I have completed or guessed a word):

> Language, spoken or written, is a species of signs. Signs are [means] [modes of conveying, by means] are modes of conveying [through impressions on the senses] thought between intelligent beings by means of sensible impressions. [Thence a solitary – perfectly solitary being could have no need of signs, including language.] Signs are of two kinds, representative & symbolical. [The former resemble the thing the notion of which they are either (?)] Representative signs convey notions or things by imitating the things the knowledge of which they are meant to impart; hence [they resemble] these signs *resemble* the things, [and since signs are] hence they are of the same kind of nature as the things; from which it follows that as signs are sensible impressions [the] representative signs can only convey [a know(ledge)] notions of *sensible* things. Symbolical signs, [do not] are not imitations of the things [which] the knowledge of which they convey, they do not resemble the things; the connection between such signs & the thing signified is hence conventional, and [is only] such signs are only significant to those who are aware of the "convention", whereas the connection between [symb(olical)] representative signs and the thing signified is natural and rep(resentative) signs are usually intelligible to all who have sufficient intelligence to understand the things themselves. Examples of representative signs are paintings & statues: of symbolical signs . . . .

This passage almost certainly does not represent Frazer's own thoughts on the subject of language as a structure of signifying codes, but it is also clearly not copied, like the rest of the notes in the notebook, from an earlier text. The notes appear to be Frazer's attempts to piece together

in his own mind the substance of someone else's argument. It is a matter of conjecture whose thesis this note attempts to summarise, since it is too brief to identify the source with any accuracy. If Frazer had gone on to tackle the difficult matter of "symbolical signs", then our task would have been easier. But there are certain clues: first, the date, which probably belongs to the beginning of the 1880s; secondly, Frazer's use of the term "conventional",[31] which would suggest the debate, which raged throughout the last third of the nineteenth century and was finally brought to a conclusion by Saussure's *Cours* in 1915, over the "conventionality" of language as opposed to its status as a natural order. In this area, linguistics moved very close to anthropology, possibly arousing Frazer's interest. Even Tylor, the "father of anthropology", felt moved explicitly to refute the concept of language as an arbitrary system of signifying conventions:

> That the selection of words to express ideas was ever purely arbitrary, that is to say, such that it would have been consistent with its principles to exchange any two words as we may exchange algebraic symbols, or to shake up a number of words in a bag and redistribute them at random among the ideas they represented, is a supposition opposed to such knowledge as we have of the formation of language.[32]

A more precise source may be offered by the notebook itself. Frazer was keen on making lists of books he had read or intended to read. In the notebook he lists a number of works "to read or finish reading": "Hume's Treatise", as he calls it, is listed along with works by the Indo-Europeanist Max Müller (*The Science of Language* and *Chips from a German Workshop*) and the early structuralists A. H. Sayce (*Introduction to the Science of Language*) and W. D. Whitney (*The Science and Growth of Language*). Whatever the provenance of Frazer's note – and Whitney must be a prime candidate – the presence of Hume, Müller, Sayce and Whitney in Frazer's list is more than simply fortuitous. For Frazer's note is representative of a nascent semiology – an awareness of our capacities to generate constellations of signifying structures from a few "atomic" shaping principles – which finally came to fruition for Frazer in *The Golden Bough*.

To associate one of the revered founders of modern consciousness with a figure regarded as a "verbose blimp of Victorian prejudice" who wrote his long books "between a heavy tea and an even heavier dinner" is to beg several questions, not the least of which is the reason for Saussure's ubiquitous triumph as against Frazer's general eclipse. This

cannot be wholly accounted for by the demise of Frazer's type of armchair anthropology; the twentieth century can outstrip the nineteenth in its roll-call of anthropological grand theorists. Nor is it simply a matter of functionalism replacing Frazer as a more workable model, since functionalism too has been superseded by a symbolic anthropology and a view of societies as "texts" rather than data – a view which is more in keeping with Frazer's position than Malinowski's. But, if Frazer's great compendium seems useful now only as ironic poetic decoration, the reason, I would propose, lies where this essay began, with Frazer's initial project of discovering the nature of the primitive religion of the Aryans. It is not just that the Aryans are no longer regarded as an important issue, but that the processes of myth and magic by which Frazer attempted to answer the question of origins do not seem sufficiently "original". His solution to the search for a primary cognitive fabric is simply not minimal enough: language is prior to, more minimal than, magic. As a consequence, Lévi-Strauss sees culture shaped like language and nowhere says that it is structured like magic; yet in many important respects his work is closer to a Frazerian project than he acknowledges.

NOTES

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Remarks on Frazer's "Golden Bough"*, ed. Rush Rhees (Retford, Notts: Brynmill Press, 1979) p. 17.
2. Cited in Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on Images of Non-European Man*, tr. Elizabeth Wentholt (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 65.
3. Ackerman, p. 81; cf. *GB 1*, I, x.
4. J. P. Mallory, "The History of the Indo-European Problem", *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 1, no. 1 (1973), 60.
5. Ibid., pp. 21–65.
6. R. W. Wescott, "The Evolution of Language: Reopening a Closed Subject", *Studies in Language*, 19, no. 1/4 (1967), 67.
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8. Müller (1887), quoted in E. F. K. Koerner (ed.), *Towards a Historiography of Linguistics: Selected Essays* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1978), p. 31.
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10. August Schleicher, "The Darwinian Theory and the Science of Language" (1863), tr. Alexander V. W. Bikkers, and "On the Significance of Language for the Natural History of Man" (1865), tr. J. Peter Maher, in E. F. K. Koerner (ed.), *Linguistics and Evolutionary Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins,

1983) pp. 1–82. For descriptions of the systems employed by Schleicher see Koerner, *Towards a Historiography of Linguistics*; J. P. Maher, "More on the History of the Comparative Method: The Tradition of Darwinism in August Schleicher's Work", *Anthropological Linguistics*, 8, no. 3/2 (1966), 1–12; Stam, *Inquiries into the Origin of Language*.

11. Edward Evans-Pritchard, *A History of Anthropological Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 187.
12. Quoted in Ackerman, p. 282.
13. *GB* 3, XI, 88.
14. Evans-Pritchard, *A History of Anthropological Thought*, p. 150.
15. Quoted in John Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory: A Philosophical Study of Theories of Religion in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 138.
16. Henson, *British Social Anthropologists and Language*, pp. 15 and 56.
17. A. H. Sayce, *Introduction to the Science of Language*, 2 vols (London, 1880) I, 75.
18. For a discussion of Schelling's system of the parallel evolution of myth and language see Stam, *Inquiries into the Origin of Language*, 201ff.
19. For a discussion of Comte's system of the parallel evolution of language and belief see ibid.
20. Henson, *British Social Anthropologists and Language*, p. 5.
21. Quoted in Ackerman, p. 51.
22. Ibid., p. 48.
23. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 98–9.
24. Henson, *British Social Anthropologists and Language*, p. 10.
25. *GB A*, p. 49.
26. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (1789), ed. D. G. C. Macnabb (London: Fontana, 1962), pp. 54–5.
27. R. Angus Downie, *Frazer and "The Golden Bough"* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1970), p. 59.
28. E. F. K. Koerner, *Ferdinand de Sassure* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1973) pp. 9ff.
29. J. G. Frazer, "The Language of Animals", *Archaeological Review*, April–May 1888, pp. 81–91.
30. Henson, *British Social Anthropologists and Language*, p. 9.
31. "Every vocable was to us an arbitrary and conventional sign: arbitrary because any one of the thousand other vocables could have been just as easily learned by us and associated with the same idea; conventional, because the one we had acquired had its sole ground and sanction in the consenting usage of the community of which we formed a part – William Dwight Whitney, "Language and the Study of Language" (1867), in *Whitney on Language: Selected Writings of William Dwight Whitney*, ed. Michael Silverstein (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), p. 10.
32. Henson, *British Social Anthropologists and Language*, p. 16.

VI

ANTHROPOLOGY AS CONSOLATION: THE STRANGE CASE OF MOTHERKIN

Robert Fraser

In a postscript added to *The White Goddess* in 1960, Robert Graves describes the inception of the work. Exiled in Devon during the Second World War, he had embarked on his historical novel *The Golden Fleece* (1944), writing all the while in a study strewn with *objets d'art* originating from the Gold Coast.

> I had in my work-room several small West African brass objects – bought from a London dealer – gold-dust weights, mostly in the shape of animals, among them a humpback playing a flute. I also had a small brass box, with a lid, intended (so the dealer told me) to contain gold dust. I kept the hunchback seated on the box. In fact, he is still seated there; but I knew nothing about him, or about the design on the box-lid, until ten years had gone by. Then I learned that the hunchback was a herald in the service of the Queen-mother of some Akan state; and that every Akan Queen-mother . . . claims to be an incarnation of the Triple Moon-goddess Ngame. The design on the box-lid, a spiral, connected by a single stroke to the rectangular frame enclosing it – the frame having nine teeth on either side – means "None greater in the universe than the Triple Goddess Ngame!" These gold weights and the box were made before the British seizure of the Gold Coast, by craftsmen subservient to the Goddess, and regarded as highly magical.[1]

The spiralling adinkra design on the poet's box-lid is fairly easy to identify, but it is entirely typical of Graves, who though prolix with his classical references seldom acknowledges his secondary sources, that he should not tell us to whom he owed its interpretation. From hints subsequently dropped in the text it is clear that he had been reading the works of that pioneer of Akan ethnology Robert Sutherland Rattray, a Scot appointed

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

by Governor Guggisberg of the Gold Coast in the 1920s to prepare the scientific groundwork for the government's policy of Indirect Rule. Rattray's books *Ashanti* (1923), *Art and Religion in Ashanti* (1927) and *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (1929) are classics in the field to which anthropologists and even jurists still refer,[2] yet no one with a background in the recent history of ideas can read them today without recognising the august shadow of Rattray's mentor and correspondent James George Frazer. Rattray was one of the select group of protégés whom Frazer collected during his period as *eminence grise* of anthropological studies during the early years of the twentieth century. The most prominent of these protégés was Bronisław Malinowski, to whom we shall come in due course; but in the meantime the influence of Frazer on the course of West African anthropology is one of the subject's more alluring unexplored byways. Is Ngame, the triple goddess of the Ashanti, another of Demeter's daughters?

A personal anecdote might help to expand the point. In 1970 I was appointed to a lectureship at a university in an Akan-speaking area slightly to the south of Ashanti, where my Head of Department was the maternal nephew of J. B. Danquah, author of *The Akan Doctrine of God*[3] and a pioneer of the Ghanaian nationalist movement. Vaguely aware of the significance of their family relation in a matrilinear system, I sought enlightenment on the matter. The answer was instantaneous and firm: "I can do little better than refer you to Rattray." Now Rattray's work I already knew, so the answer took me slightly aback. I had come to drink at the source, and little expected to be directed back to Fraserburgh. Rattray had got his model of matrilinear descent from Frazer, who as I was later to learn derived his from John Ferguson M'Lennan, author of *Primitive Marriage*, who owed his ideas ultimately to an analysis of the table of descent of the Pictish kings. It was with growing wonderment that I contemplated the multiple paradox of a real-life scion of the Akan counselling a young Briton of Scottish descent to take as his guide to the mazes of Akan law and custom the writings of another Scot who had derived his ideas from a famous Glaswegian, who had borrowed his from an Edinburgh attorney haunted by memories of the Picts. I learned of the vagaries of the comparative method early.

It will be seen that the second anecdote raises one question in a peculiarly acute form: to what extent do matrilinear societies exist, and to what extent are they constructs of the mind? The first is a complicated question best left to the anthropologists; the second, however, is more properly the province of the historian of ideas. Why at certain times and in certain places do people come to concentrate on ideas of matriarchy

or matriliny? For my erstwhile head of department and the people among whom I lived for five years, the matrilinear kinship system was a matter of everyday fact, but the principal centres for the generation of matriarchal theory lay far away in Europe, where matrilinear kinship was unknown. The ancient Greeks, as Simon Pembroke has effectively demonstrated, possessed their own body of matriarchal myth.[4] But the Victorians too seem to have been obsessed with matriarchal theories, and for interesting reasons. These ideas flourished from the 1860s at least up as far as the 1920s, and then trailed off in two incompatible directions: fading out in the scholarly community while being adopted in a sweeping and uncritical form by ideologues who then employed them for their own political purposes. Have these developments anything to tell us about the way our forefathers thought, and the ways in which we have come to diverge from them?

The fountainhead of the Victorian idea was a well-thumbed passage in Herodotos. Of the Lycians he reports,

> Their manners resemble in certain respects those of the the Cretans, in others those of the Carians, but one of their customs, that of adopting their mother's name rather than their father's, is unparalleled. If you ask a Lycian to identify himself he will give you his own name then his mother's, followed by his grandmother's and great-grandmother's and so on.[5]

Herodotos's observation has received no support from extant inscriptions, and recent scholars have cast doubt on the whole matter.[6] For our purposes, however, it will be sufficient to note what Frazer makes of this passage. For him, motherkin among the Lycians was a sort of Tylorian survival. By the fifth century BC patriarchy had swept across the plains of Western Asia reducing all in its path, while, stranded up on their plateau, the Lycians carried on regardless:

> the older custom lingered in Lycia down to the historical period. And we may conjecture that in former times it was widely spread through Asia Minor. The secluded situation and rugged mountains of Lycia favoured the survival of a native language and of native institutions long after these had disappeared from the wide plains and fertile valleys which lay on the highroads of war and commerce. Lycia was to Asia Minor what the highlands and walls of Scotland have been to Britain, the last entrenchments where the old race stood at bay. And even among the Semites of antiquity, property traces of au older svstem of mother-kin. with its looser sexual relations appear to have

> survived in the sphere of religion. At all events one of the most learned and acute of Semitic scholars adduced what he regarded as evidence sufficient to prove "that in old Arabian religion gods and goddesses often occurred in pairs, the goddess being the greater, so that the god cannot be her Baal, that the goddess is often a mother without being a wife, and the god her son, and that the progress of things was towards changing gods into goddesses or lowering them beneath the male deity."[7]

The learned Semitist is Frazer's mentor William Robertson Smith, Arabist and dedicatee of *The Golden Bough*, of whom more anon. In the meantime we must note three things: first, as with most variants of Victorian matriarchal theory, the cultural evolution is uniform and flows in one direction – from female towards male; secondly, the system of matriliny is connected with that other Victorian wet dream – the "looser sexual relations" that supposedly went along with it; thirdly, religious ideas are seen to be a reflection of the kinship system.

The relationship between goddesses and matriarchs had first been noted by Jacob Bachofen, whose influential *Das Mutterrecht* of 1861 had taken the Lycians as its starting-point.[8] But Bachofen and Frazer, as we shall soon find out, looked at this relationship quite differently. Though Frazer had read Bachofen, whom he acknowledges in the bibliography to the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*, he came upon him late in the day, his initial introduction to this debate coming from quite another direction. He also knew of the work of Joseph-François Lafitau, the eighteenth-century Jesuit priest whose *Moeurs des sauvages américains comparée aux moeurs des premiers temps* supplies us with our earliest account of matrilinear descent among the Iroquois Indians, with whom Lafitau had been so impressed that he mistook them for Lycians who had migrated by way of the Bering Strait.[9] By 1914 Frazer had also read the works of Lewis Morgan, who in 1877 had employed the Iroquois evidence to construct an entire evolutionary scheme of marriage.[10] Yet all of this seems to have poured off him like water. Lafitau he only uses once, and in connection with tabooed names rather than marriage customs (*GB 3*, III, 365), and Morgan he connects with Otawa totems and not marriage at all (*GB 3*, VIII, 225n.). In order to understand the real impetus behind Frazer's work, we have to go back further in his career. For Frazer, matriliny was a homegrown issue. His guides in this matter were fellow Scots.

We must return once more to 1861. In the very year that Bachofen published *Das Mutterrecht* the English jurist Henry Maine brought out

a book which was to dominate jurisprudence for nearly a hundred years. *Ancient Law* was an attempt to explain the Western legal inheritance by reference to the institution of the *patria potestas* in ancient Rome.[11] Like Rome, all ancient societies had, Maine argued, been patriarchal in origin. Maine's exposition is extraordinary in the elegance of its sweep, but four years later it provoked a rejoinder.

J. F. M'Lennan was an Edinburgh attorney with a keen amateur interest in ethnology. I have had reason to summarise his book *Primitive Marriage* of 1865 elsewhere.[12] Suffice it to notice here that for M'Lennan, as for Lafitau and Morgan, or indeed for Bachofen (whom M'Lennan read the year after publishing his own work), motherkin, which he calls "kinship through females only", was a system which universally preceded descent through the father. But, where Bachofen had derived his case from ancient literature, and Lafitau and Morgan from local observation of one people, M'Lennan stood his ground on the universality in the earliest societies of the custom of polyandry. Like the institution of bride capture, with which his study begins, polyandry he sees as a response to a scarcity of females arising from the widespread custom of female infanticide. Polyandry was of various kinds, but it had this invariable consequence, that the exact paternity of any given child could never be certain:

> Fathers must usually be known before men will think of relationship through fathers – indeed, before the idea of a father could be formed. There could be no *system* of kinship through males if paternity was usually, or in a great proportion of cases, uncertain. The requisite degree of certainty can be had only when the mother is appropriated to a particular man as his wife, and when women thus appropriated are usually found faithful to their lords.[13]

Now, on 24 October 1878 Frazer, who had taken his degree that March, entered himself in deference to his father's wishes as a student at the Middle Temple.[14] During his legal studies it fell to his lot to read Maine's *Ancient Law*, from which with typical diligence he took meticulous notes. The notebook survives in the library of his old college, and across the bottom of one page, with reference to Maine's claim that all societies like Rome were patriarchal in origin, he has written, "This applies chiefly to Indo-European and Semitic races. In other races a very different system has been found to exist, traces of which are not wanting even among Indo-European races. See M'Lennan's *Primitive Marriage*."[15]

Notice the exquisite tact. Maine is not wrong, simply for the most part too Eurocentric. But the seed had now been sown, and circumstances

were to help its cultivation. Five years later, in October 1883, there arrived in Cambridge the man who was to become Frazer's mentor and first guide through the maze of anthropology, William Robertson Smith.[16] Now Smith was a close friend of M'Lennan, whom he had met at the Edinburgh Evening Club in the early 1870s,[17] and all of his research was directed to one end, the vindication of M'Lennan's hint in *Primitive Marriage* that traces of matrilinear descent and connected customs were to be found even among the Arabs.[18] I have dealt with Smith's development of this idea at length elsewhere: its effect on the highly impressionable young Frazer can well be imagined.

But Frazer invariably burned on a slow fuse. He then seems largely to have forgotten motherkin; there are no traces of it in the First Edition of *The Golden Bough* (1890). But on the publication of the Second Edition in 1900 a trenchant but respectful review called Frazer's attention to gaps in his theory which he could not now ignore.[19] A. B. Cook was a classical fellow of Queens', Cambridge, a specialist on Greek and Roman mythology who had taken much closer cognisance than had Frazer of the 1885 excavations of the lakeside shrine at Nemi.[20] Frazer had referred to these in a footnote, and then for reasons of his own proceeded regardless. It was Cook's duty to call him to heel in the *Classical Review* and to suggest that in certain respects his view of the King of the Wood was sadly wanting. The result was a summons to Trinity where he and Frazer discussed the matter over tea.[21] A year later Cook published a recantation so abject as to be almost embarrassing, and went on to construe certain aspects of Greek religion in the light of Frazer's theories, including the sacred grove of Zeus at Dodona, whose priesthood he now regarded as subject to a very similar rite of succession to that Frazer had sketched out for Nemi.[22]

The influence, however, flowed in more than one direction. Cook had persuaded Frazer that his interpretation of the Aricia priesthood could only stand if brought into line with patterns of succession observed elsewhere in ancient Latium. The result was the inclusion in the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*, on which Frazer was then starting work, of a series of chapters with which most of Frazer's readers will be familiar: "Sacred Marriage", "The Kings of Rome and Alba", "The Succession to the Kingdom in Ancient Latium" and "The Worship of the Oak".[23]

Based on his *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship* (1905), delivered three years after Cook's intervention,[24] these chapters are now so familiar to readers of the popular abridgement that *The Golden Bough* would seem incomplete without them, but all of them stemmed at Cook's

suggestion from an attempt to render the original theory more tenable. In 1890 Frazer had claimed that the mysterious priest of the sacred grove at Nemi had embodied a god, but which? There were so many divine personalities associated with the cult in legend – Hippolytus; Virbius; Jupiter; Diana and the wood nymph Egeria – that no clear picture seemed to emerge. At Cook's bidding, Jupiter was now to eclipse all others, the argument being that Jupiter was pre-eminent in Rome, and, if Nemi were to be viewed as a national shrine common to the Latin League, it would seem natural that he should be pre-eminent there also.[25] But two problems remained. As Cook had complained in his review of 1902, "We look in vain for any connection between Jupiter and the Arician Grove". Moreover, nominally the shrine was dedicated to Diana.

Frazer's solution to these objections was to bring the whole question of divine marriage into the foreground. Henceforth Diana and Jupiter were to be married. There was of course a hitch. As every schoolchild knows, Jupiter was married to Juno. At this juncture the beneficent plasticity of Latin proper names came to Frazer's rescue. Jupiter in fact was none other than Janus, whom some call Dianus.[26] As Dianus he could quite properly preside over the grove in happy union with Diana, and the priest could quite credibly impersonate him. By plucking the golden bough from the oak the aspirant to the kingdom of the woods at one and the same time identified himself as Jupiter and acquired Diana's token. He could thus lay claim both to the priesthood and to the goddess's hand in marriage. Thenceforth slave and goddess, divine king and consort, ruled jointly, fertilising the fields of their domain through the power of homoeopathic magic.

Folklore too came to Frazer's assistance. The theme of the humble interloper who wins a princess by feat of arms and then reigns as king is common in legend, and not least in Roman literature. The last six books of the *Aeneid*, to cite but one instance, depend on it entirely. It was not merely Aeneas, however, who sought political supremacy through a conquest at once military and amorous, but a whole succession of Roman heroes, including the kings of Alba and Rome. In the process of supplying a corrective to his earlier obtuseness, Cook had reminded Frazer of something which, in the heat of devising his first theory, he had quite overlooked. Right at the beginning of his career Frazer had published an article in which he had claimed that the focus of each of the early Latin communities was the Vestal fire whose circular hearth the king's daughters tended.[27] Whoever controlled the fire controlled the kingdom. Now, in 1885 when the ruins of Nemi were unearthed, a circular stylobate

was discovered in the precinct which John Savile Lumley, the British ambassador who excavated the site, had taken for an altar base.[28] Might this not be the cradle of the Vestal fire, and might not Nemi and Rome in this respect be similar? One of Diana's names as perpetuated in Nemi was Hestia or Vesta. In this case, whoever conquered the grove gained control of the kingdom and by the same token the hand of Diana in her capacity as doyenne of the Vestal virgins.

Frazer did not have to rely on analogy alone. The table of the Roman kings was highly suggestive of some kind of exogamous rule of succession, since few of the monarchs of whom we know were succeeded by their sons. The same seemed to be the fate of the Alban and the Etruscan kings, and parallels could also be adduced elsewhere.[29] The Venerable Bede says that the Picts traced their kings through the female line,[30] and Herodotos as we have already seen had said much the same about the Lycians.

But these hints in Herodotos and Bede were useless without an element which M'Lennan alone had added. In his analysis of the various types of exogamy, M'Lennan had laid great stress on one type, called *beena* or matrilocal marriage, whereby the husband or husbands came to reside with the wife, whose place of origin was adopted by their children.[31] Frazer thought he could detect remnants of *beena* marriage in the dynastic tables of ancient Rome, the discontinuities in which suggested that every generation had been sired anew by an outsider.[32] Arguing from certain remnants of what looked like ancient contests for the kingship, such as the Regifugium, whereby the Rex Sacrorum fled annually from the Forum,[33] Frazer devised the notion that at one time the kingdom had always been up for grabs by any interloper – of however humble an origin it did not matter – who could assert his prowess by force of arms. He thus proved himself worthy both of one of the Vestal virgins, who in earlier days were always the king's daughters, and of reigning in the old king's stead. His birth was considered irrelevant because the royal descent would always be traced through his wife, among whose daughters the next king would also seek his spouse.

Such is the system of motherkin as it features in the last *Golden Bough*. But no sooner is it stated than a difficult arises. M'Lennan's whole theory had been based on the premise of universal polyandry, and there never was any suggestion that the ancient Romans had ever been anything but monogamous. Now, in monogamous systems, by M'Lennan's reckoning,

the fact of paternity immediately becomes of enormous account. How could Frazer explain such wilful indifference to paternity in a monogamous system? The reason was that in the meantime Frazer had worked out a way of maintaining M'Lennan's ideas quite independently of polyandry.

In order to sort this one out, we have to step back a few years. 1905 was the year when in *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship* Frazer first gave vent to his new ideas about the Roman succession. It was also the year of one of his most spectacular *volte-faces* in a seemingly unrelated area. He had been having second thoughts about his old chestnut, totemism. It was a question on which Frazer never quite seemed to be able to make up his mind. In 1890 he was inclined to view the totem as the place where primitive man kept the external soul which featured so prominently in the closing chapter of *The Golden Bough*. Then in 1899 the researches of Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen in Central Australia convinced him that the totem was the object of an annual sacrament which fertilised the outback through some sort of homoeopathic magic.[34] But in 1901–2 Spencer and Gillen mounted a second expedition from Oodnadatta to Powell Creek, then eastwards Barroloola and on to the Gulf of Carpentaria. When in 1904 their findings were published as *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* a remarkable fact became apparent. The further Spencer and Gillen had travelled towards the coast, the more unambigiously did the totem seem to descend in the male line.[35] This contrasted markedly with what they had discovered in 1896–7 in the vicinity of Alice Springs, where a quite different pattern of totemic descent was apparent. There, among the Arunta and Kaitish, a totem was allotted in accordance with the totemic centre nearest which the mother first became conscious that she was with child.[35] Was there a connection between this way of bestowing totems and absence of descent through the male line? Could one explain the other?

The startling ingredient in the Arunta manner of bestowing totems was the complete irrelevance to it of any notion of a biological father. This fact, together with the commonly held notion that the Australian aboriginals represented the earliest extant stage of man's social organisation, tempted Frazer to look further. The result was his third, or conceptional, theory of totemism, first aired in 1905 in two articles in the *Fortnightly Review* called "The Beginnings of Religion and Totemism among the Australian Aboriginals".[37] The essence of it was this. The Arunta could not trace descent through the father because in their sublime innocence they had no notion of the role of the man in the procreative process. The essential connection between the act of sex and

the fact of conception, which seems so patently obvious to modern man, had simply passed them by.

It has to be said that this theory recommended itself to that slightly patronising strain in Frazer which was always inclined to regard non-Western man as a simpleton. Be that as it may, it soon gave rise to a conviction that at some stage or other all societies must have been similarly ignorant. The resulting theory of the universal "primitive ignorance of paternity" was first made explicit in *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910),[38] a work which, with its meticulous region-by-region survey of kinship in different parts of the world, became a vital source book on which field-workers of the next generation were to draw.

We shall return to this in a minute, but meanwhile it is as well to set out exactly what Frazer had now achieved. Whether he liked it or not, he had now aired notions which lent themselves powerfully to a simplification of history. That men in various societies have traced their descent through the female line few would deny. It is certainly true for example of the Akan as described by Rattray,[39] though Rattray was, as we have already seen, in his turn strongly indebted to Frazer. But, as Sir Henry Maine had remarked as early as 1861, resting his case squarely on the Roman evidence, most societies within the span of recorded history have been patriarchal. If M'Lennan and Maine were both right, and if the primitive ignorance of paternity somehow lay at the bottom of it, at some stage in the evolutionary process fatherkin must deliberately have been imposed.

The corollary of such a conclusion was one which might have daunted Frazer, but did not frighten other theorists. In the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* Frazer identifies the first attempted imposition of patriarchal authority in Rome with the reign of Tarquin the Proud.[40] But in so doing he was laying himself open to the suggestion not only that such replacement of one system by another was a universal phenomenon but that it contained elements of coercion. To follow but one side avenue, why were the Vestals virgin? Frazer had said that it was because they were the daughters of the king, but, if at some juncture patriarchal rule was violently imposed, the insistence that the daughters of the king remained sterile would suddenly become essential to the public weal. Patriarchal authority and the maiming of female sexuality would then come together in a way that later theorists could not but find suggestive.

Enter Bronisław Malinowski. In his early years Malinowski was a protégé of Frazer's, indebted to his mentor not only for considerable personal encouragement, but for the kindly intervention which enabled him to carry out his research work in Melanesia during the war years,

when Polish émigrés were suspect. On board ship *en route* at last for the Trobriand Islands, where he was to spend the most fruitful months of his life, he wrote back gratefully to Cambridge, "Every ethnologist naturally looks back to you as the leader in our branch of learning, and your approval so kindly and generously expressed has been and will be the most efficient impulse for my work."[41]

In the Trobriand Islands Malinowski discovered a society where matriliny was firmly established, where the facts of paternity seemed to be unknown, and where, what is more, there was considerable sexual licence up to marriage, and to a lesser extent beyond. A man's nearest relative was his maternal uncle, and women enjoyed a personal latitude undreamed of in the West.[42] It was seemingly a complete vindication of much that Frazer had forecast, and six years later, when reviewing the abridged *Golden Bough* on its appearance that year, Malinowski left his readers in little doubt as to who had put him on the right track:

> The ignorance of paternity, first observed by Spencer and Gillen among one tribe only, was at once recognized by Frazer as of extreme importance. Here again his forecast was confirmed . . . by the present reviewer among a number of Papuo-Melanesian tribes of Eastern New Guinea.[43]

Malinowski's pivotal position in British social anthropology after the First World War endowed his discoveries with more weight than they possibly deserved. Indeed, the tendency for others to generalise on the basis of his work was always to cause him some personal embarrassment. By 1933 he had renounced any pretension of speculating at large on the ignorance of paternity among peoples other than those among whom he had worked, and evolutionary panaceas of human progress were always to give him qualms. To evade the public consequences of his work was, however, less easy. By 1927 he was already in the thick of a fray with the orthodox Freudians who thought that his assertion of a matrilinear mentality among the Trobrianders somehow challenged the universality of the Oedipus complex.[44]

Among certain of their heterodox colleagues meanwhile, the vista of unbridled sexuality which Malinowski's description of life on one small Melanesian atoll opened up to the less careful or more ideologically motivated reader gave rise to the suspicion that all matrilinear societies were licentious, and that ever and always patriliny was the father of repression and of guilt. It was not long before Wilhelm Reich was claiming that early human society, presided over by wide-hipped,

accommodating matriarchs, had been a paradise of total orgasmic abandon, untrammelled by the constraints of fear or social control.[45] This set-up sounds rather fun, so what tempted men to abandon it? According to this version of events men overthrew the *status quo* when they realised that their property could not be handed on to sons they recognised as exclusively their own. In so doing men at one and the same time thrust women into the social chains which have ever since encumbered them, and crippled the male and female libido at the source. Something of Reich's insistence on the parity of political and sexual restraint has got into the make-up of modern feminism, but, before we trace the ramifications of this development, it may be as well to take stock of the various streams that fed this particular river before it swelled out into the full flood of feminist apologetics as we know it.

For anthropology and psychoanalysis, important as they were, do not constitute the only streams which fed modern matriarchal theory. The other, and in some ways more intrusive, was economics. In 1884, six years before the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*, Friedrich Engels had published a work in German entitled *Der Ursprung der Familie des Privateigentums und des Staats*, translated into English in 1902 as *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Frazer almost certainly never read it. Others, however, did. Suitably filtered by time, it eventually passed into the bloodstream of matriarchal theory and thence into the consciousness of the women's movement, where it still occupies pride of place as a classic text. Engels' argument forms an intriguing counterpoint with the man contentions of *Totemism and Exogamy*, a counterpoint that plays beneath the surface of the question whenever these matters are discussed. It is no exaggeration to state that the two reconstructions of prehistory proposed by these writers, so different in temperament and persuasion, form twin poles around which any discussion of the place of women in the very earliest societies must of necessity pivot.

Engels' work too had its ethnographic underpinnings, which were very different from Frazer's. As we have already observed, there is but one reference to the work of Lewis H. Morgan in *The Golden Bough*, and it is a passing one. Engels, on the other hand, read Morgan's *Ancient Society* of 1877 religiously, founding his interpretation of mankind's early institutions foursquare upon it.[46] Based exclusively on research among the Iroquois Indians of New York State, Morgan's work spawned a myth of prelapsarian sexual liberty which was slow to die. Among the Iroquois Morgan had discovered a system of kinship classification according to which the offspring of full brothers called one another "brother" or

"sister" while children of siblings of the opposite sex addressed one another as cousins. On this somewhat slender foundation he erected an aetiology of human society according to which marriage had passed through three stages. In the first, which he called "consanguine marriage", sexual congress between parent and child was forbidden, but total freedom existed between members of the same generation, even between brother and sister. In the next, for which he coined the term "panaluan marriage", a taboo came to surround intimacy between brother and sister, who accordingly could not marry. Thus men and women now cohabited freely within a group of compatible "panalua" or partners from which their own sisters or brothers, and later their first and second cousins, were excluded. It was a remnant of this stage that Morgan thought he had discovered among the Iroquois, where one's brother's children were known to one's own offspring as "brother" and "sister" because their fathers still shared a common pool of wives, whereas one sister's children were known as cousins because one could no longer marry the mother. There then ensued a stage vital to Engels' reading when a temporary sexual exclusivity was established between two members of the larger marriage group. This Morgan called "pairing marriage", and it was of its essence that it could be dissolved at will. Out of it the institution of monogamous marriage as nineteenth-century Europe knew it was supposed to have emerged.

Engels was less interested in the microsopic layout of each of these stages then he was in the mode of transition between them. He started by looking at the withdrawal of the pairing couple from the wider marriage group. Engels, in whom puritanism of a sort ran high, regarded this change as an unambigious improvement which could only have occurred at the behest of women:

> The more in the course of economic development, undermining the old communism and increasing the density of the population, the traditional sexual relations lost their innocent character suited to the primitive forest, the more debasing and oppressive they naturally appeared to women; and the more they consequently longed for relief by the right of chastity, of temporary or permanent marriage with one man. This progress could not be due to men for the simple reason that they never, even to this day, had the least intention of renouncing the pleasure of actual group marriage. Not until the women had accomplished the transition to the pairing family could the men introduce strict monogamy – true, only for the women.[47]

And what might have induced men, once enticed into an exclusive bond, to tighten the shackles still further, albeit principally for their partners? Their wish, said Engels, that their sons should succeed them.[48] And why should this provision suddenly come to seem of such high account? Because their eyes were opened and they saw that, having progressed from hunter–gatherers to pastoralists and then farmers, they at last had something to hand on. The clue to the inception of the patriarchal system was the emergence of property.

The beginnings of patrilinear descent and the arrival of the nuclear family were then but twin facets of the same cataclysmic event. At which point Engels opens out into full throttle: "The downfall of maternal law was the historic defeat of the female sex. The men seized the reins also in the house, the women were stripped of their dignity, enslaved, tools of men's lust and mere machines for the generation of his children".[49] The crucial word here, of course, is "reduced", for it was an integral part of Engels' contention that women were once otherwise: unmanacled, even dominant. There is nothing of this in Morgan, and yet it is in the forefront of Engels' submission, so whence did it arise? The answer is not difficult to trace: Engels and his friend Marx had been reading Bachofen.[50] Between them they had distilled from his highly mystical dissertation the impression that, in some long lost age, women once lorded it over the earth. And why did Bachofen believe this to have been so? Because women had once been worshipped. In the figures of Demeter and Isis, of Astarte and Ishtar, pale reflections of a Semitic and Hellenic past, he had described the literal matriachs of some bygone order. Bachofen too had noted the facts of matrilinear descent, but, combining them with different evidence of cultic practices in the Mediterranean basin over tens of centuries, he had deduced the historical priority of female authority over male, and the eventual overthrow of the former by the latter. To test the validity of these claims we must turn back once more to Frazer.

I have already said that Frazer's indebtedness to Bachofen was slight, but he had none the less taken cognisance of *Das Mutterrecht* and in his own manner had answered it. This at least I take to be the background to the culminating chapter of Part IV of *The Golden Bough*, "Mother-Kin and Mother Goddesses".[51] It is no accident that this chapter appears at the very end of the second of the two volumes *Adonis, Attis, Osiris,* which in their original incarnation of 1906 followed in Frazer's output

immediately after *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship*, in which he had for the first time tackled the question of female descent directly. Much of the strongest writing in *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* has to do with a whole procession of Mediterranean goddesses – Astarte, Isis, Aphrodite – and in the chapter concerned Frazer is trying to decipher what ramifications if any the cultic traditions he has been examining have for the questions of descent and of power.

Frazer's verdict was unambiguous. When in past ages men held the female persona up for veneration they were honouring not their rulers – for with limited exceptions Frazer believed that women had never ruled – but the frail vessels of their own ascendancy. It was certainly true that matrilinear societies favoured goddesses, but not because such divinities reflected the authority of supposed human counterparts. In fact, the opposite was almost certainly the case. Matrilinear descent was most marked in societies where women were most decidedly oppressed. The passage has been influential, and it is worth quoting in full:

> In order to dissipate misapprehensions which appear to be rife on this subject, it may be well to remind or inform the reader that the ancient and widespread custom of tracing descent through the mother does not by any means imply that the government of tribes which observe the custom is in the hands of women: in short, it should always be born in mind that mother-kin does not mean mother-rule. On the contrary the practise of mother-kin prevails most extensively among the lowest savages, with whom woman, instead of being the ruler of man, is always his drudge, and often little better than his salve. Indeed, so far is the system from implying any social superiority of women that it probably took its rise from what we should now regard as their deepest degradation, to wit, from the state of society in which the relations of the sexes were so loose and vague that children could not be fathered on any particular man.[52]

Frazer had in fact put his finger on the cardinal error which has bedevilled much matriarchal thinking even to this day: the supposition that societies which compute the lineage through the female line necessarily accord women as social beings greater respect. For Bachofen, as for Engels, and later for Graves, matriliny and matriarchy are in fact identical. The difficulty arises not so much from a misunderstanding of society as from a misconception about religion. When ancient man prostrated himself before the shrine of the mother goddess in any of her diverse and myriadic forms, he was honouring not (*pace* Graves) the feminine

principle, and not (*pace* Bachofen or Engels) women in general, but the vessel whose teeming womb assured his own inheritance and hence ascendancy. This was why the pharaohs of Egypt, even up to the time of the Ptolemies, married their sisters, not because they venerated sisterhood, but to secure the line. Nor was it reasonable to suppose that women had a hand in these mystical or political arrangements: men accorded women the role of perpetuators of the princely succession, and then induced them to bow before the apotheoses of their own fertility. Matriarchal religion, then, was a cunning masculine invention. As Frazer famously puts it in his tersest style, "Men create goddesses and women worship them."[53]

Which brings us to the unworshipping woman. This is no place for a digest of recent feminist theory, but it might be as well to take a look at one writer who has a surprising amount in common with Frazer. I take Simone de Beauvoir's version of the past because it is the starting-point for contemporary feminist theory, and in many ways the severest and most challenging of the versions at present before us.[54] When in the drear post-war years Beauvoir sat down to write *Le Deuxième sexe*, she was surrounded by competing and obtrusive monisms: the economic monism of Engels, the psychoanalytic monism of Freud or of his wild offspring Reich. Any of these might have offered a way out of her difficulties, a consoling myth of the past, but it was a way she was determined not to take. For in the austerer aspects of Sartrean ethics the compensations of a reconstructed past come to represent an especially galling variety of bad faith. For Beauvoir, indeed, woman's direst enemies are her illusions. In reaching out for a way of dispelling those illusions, it is interestingly Frazer whom she finds to hand:

> The triumph of the patriarchate was neither a matter of chance nor the result of violent revolution. From humanity's beginnings, their biological advantage has enabled the males to affirm their status as sole and sovereign subjects; they have never abdicated this position; they once relinquished a part of their independent existence to Nature and to Woman, but afterwards they won it back. Condemned to play the part of the Other, woman was also condemned to hold only uncertain power: slave or idol, it was never she who chose her lot. "Men make the gods; women worship them", as Frazer has said; men indeed decide whether their deities shall be females or males; woman's place in society is always what men assign her; at no time has she ever imposed her her own law.[55]

So much for Bachofen. So much too for the pleasures of compensation. For that which Frazer and Beauvoir share is an awareness of the way society constructs its own myths of consolation. All societies, it seems, conjure up their opposites. In solid patriarchal societies, where men hold substantive power, and where descent flows unhindered through the male line, it is a comfort to dream of worlds in which something very different might be the case – provided, that is, that the alternatives are sufficiently far off in space or in time. The Victorians were no exception in this respect. Two books of the 1860s engendered a luxuriant growth in matriarchal theory during the period. This was then inherited by the field anthropologists of the 1920s. By that time, however, real matrilinear societies were being discovered, societies in which, at least on the surface, descent if not power were shared. No longer could scholars contemplate the matriarchal alternative wistfully from the fireside. It now loomed closer and waxed more threatening. The shock waves thus induced forced a retreat in wholesale academic speculation, but they also encouraged the ideologically motivated to take up the cudgel. The resulting debate split both the generations and the sexes, but the means through which the notion of matriliny passed from one generation to the other was the work of Sir James Frazer.

NOTES

References to manuscript material held in the Wren Library at Trinity College, Cambridge, are prefixed "TCC".

1. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, 3rd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), pp. 488–9.
2. There is one other way in which Graves may have gleaned his information: through the books of Eva Meyerowitz, an art-teacher at Achimota College, Accra, whose books experienced something of a vogue in the 1950s. But this is only to extend the route, since she too draws largely on the earlier books of Rattray. See especially *The Sacred State of the Akan* (1951), *The Akan Traditions of Origin* (1952), *The Akan of Ghana: Their Ancient Beliefs* (1958); *The Divine Kingship in Ghana and Ancient Egypt* (1960) and *At the Court of an African King* (1962) (all London: Faber and Faber).
3. Joseph Boakye Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God* (London and Redhill: Lutterworth, 1944).
4. See Simon Pembroke, "Women in Charge: The Function of Alternatives in Early Greek Tradition and the Ancient Idea of Matriarchy", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxxix (1976), 1–35, and "The Early Human Family: Some Views, 1770–1870", in R. R. Bolgar (ed.), *Classical Influences on Western Thought 1650–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-

sity Press, 1979), pp. 275–91. Cf. also Pierre Vidal-Nacquet on women and slaves in R. L. Gordon (ed.), *Myth, Religion and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and his *Le Chasseur noir* (Paris: François Maspero, 1981).
5. Herodotos, I, 173.
6. The inscriptions are collected in Ernst Kalinka, *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, I (Vienna, 1901), and discussed in Simon Pembroke, "Last of the Matriarchs: A Study of the Inscriptions of Lycia", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, VIII (1965), 217–47.
7. GB 3, VI, 212–13.
8. Jacob Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht: eine Untersuchung über die Gynaikokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart, 1861).
9. Joseph François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps*, I (Paris, 1724), 69, 89–92.
10. Lewis Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York, 1877). An earlier attempt to explain the Iroquois kinship system can be found in *League of the Iroquois* (Rochester, NY, 1851).
11. Henry Sumner Maine, *Ancient Law: Its Connection with the Early History of Society, and its Relation to Modern Ideas* (London, 1861).
12. John F. M'Lennan, *Primitive Marriage: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies* (Edinburgh, 1865). See my summary in Robert Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough": The Origins and Growth of an Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 23–5.
13. M'Lennan, *Primitive Marriage*, pp. 157–8.
14. See H. A. C. Sturgess (ed.), *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple* (London: Butterworth, 1949), II, for year 1878.
15. Notebook *Primitive Law*, TCC 0.11.39. The note refers to Maine's statement that "Comparative Jurisprudence shows the primitive condition of the race was Patriarchal."
16. Ackerman, p. 59.
17. Cf. John Sutherland Black and George Chrystal, *The Life of William Robertson Smith* (London: A. & C. Black, 1912), p. 116 (letter of 29 October 1869). The Edinburgh Evening Club was founded by M'Lennan, and Smith attended the first meeting.
18. M'Lennan, *Primitive Marriage*, pp. 34, 300.
19. A. B. Cook, "The Golden Bough and the Rex Nemorensis", *Classical Review*, XVI (October 1902), 365–80.
20. For which see Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough"*, pp. 2–6.
21. See Frazer's letter to Cook, 19 October 1902, TCC 1.57. See also his letter of 5 November 1905, TCC 1.59: "I shall never forget your generosity in pouring out to me the stream of your facts without any intention of using them yourself."
22. A. B. Cook, "Zeus, Jupiter and the Oak", *Classical Review*, XVII (1903), 174–86, 268–78, 403–21, and XVIII (1904), 75–9, 325–8, 360–75. Cf. also his "The European Sky God", *Folk-lore*, XV (1904), 264–315, 364–426, and XVI (1905), 260–332.
23. *GB 3*, II, 120–323; also *GB A*, pp. 139–68.
24. Delivered at Trinity in the Lent Term, 1905, as "The Evolution of the Kingship in Ancient Society" (TCC 23.3), subsequently published as *Lectures*

on the Early History of the Kingship (London: Macmillan, 1905).
25. *GB 3*, II, 174ff.
26. *GB 3*, II, 381ff.
27. J. G. Frazer "The Prytaneum, the Temple of Vesta, the Vestals, Perpetual Fires", *Journal of Philology*, XIV (1885), 145ff; repr. in *Garnered Sheaves* (London: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 51–76.
28. See Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough"*, p. 5.
29. *GB 3*, II, 268ff.
30. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, II.i.7.
31. M'Lennan, *Primitive Marriage*, p. 186; also *GB* 3, II, 271.
32. *GB 3*, II, 271.
33. *GB* 3, II, 290, 308ff.
34. Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1902). Frazer's recantation was recorded in the *Fortnightly Review*, XLV (April–May 1899), 647–665 and 835–52; repr. in *Totemism and Exogamy* (London: Macmillan, 1910), I, 89–138.
35. Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1903), pp. 144, 163, 169, 174–6.
36. Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 123–5.
37. *Fortnightly Review*, LXXVIII (July–September 1905), 162–72 and 452–66; repr. in *Totemism and Exogamy*, I, 139–72.
38. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, esp. IV, 155.
39. See especially Robert Sutherland Rattray, *Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press 1973), pp. 77–85.
40. *GB 3*, II, 291.
41. TCC Add.MS b.36/175, letter from SS *Makambo*, 25 October 1917; quoted in Ackerman, pp. 266–7. The letter stresses Malinowski's indebtedness to *Totemism and Exogamy*.
42. Recorded in Bronisław Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia: An Ethnographic Account of Courtship, Marriage, and Family Life among the Natives of the Trobriand Islands, New Guinea* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1929).
43. Bronisław Malinowski, review of the Abridged Edition of *The Golden Bough* (1922) in *Nature*, 19 May 1923, pp. 658–62; repr. as "Science and Superstition of Primitive Mankind" in *Sex, Culture and Myth* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), pp. 268ff.
44. He was more especially locked in combat with Ernest Jones. See Bronisław Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927), especially his definition of matriliny (p. 9), his definition of the role of the maternal uncle (p. 46), his discussion of Melanesian complexes (pp. 77ff) and his discussion of the Oedipus complex (p. 81): "Applying to each society a terse, though somewhat crude formula, we might say that in the Oedipus Complex there is a repressed desire to kill the father and marry the mother, while in the matrilinear society of the Trobriands the wish is to marry the sister and to kill the maternal uncle." A Melanesian Hamlet would be intriguing.
45. Wilhelm Reich, *Character Analysis*, tr. Vincent R. Carfagno, 3rd edn (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), pp. xxvff.
46. Friedrich Engels, *Des Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des*

Staats, 7th edn (Stuttgart, 1896), pp. 9ff.
47. Ibid., pp. 37–8.
48. Ibid., pp. 47ff.
49. Ibid., p. 42.
50. Ibid., pp. 35ff.
51. *GB3*, VI, 201–18.
52. *GB3*, VI, 208–9.
53. *GB3*, VI, 211.
54. Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).
55. Ibid., I: *Les Faits et les mythes*, pp. 127–8.

VII

FRAZER, YEATS AND THE RECONSECRATION OF FOLKLORE

Warwick Gould

I

In his best-known image of personal immortality, Yeats glimpsed himself taking his "bodily form" not from "any natural thing" but from

> such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
> Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
> To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium
> Of what is past, or passing, or to come.
> (*VP* 408)

That golden bough scarcely suggests that Yeats wanted to hide his indebtedness to Frazer: the allusion was surely intended and has had a rather strangling effect. It is widely known that Yeats read *The Golden Bough*, and has been for some time. Yet that indebtedness has not been re-examined in relation to the history of his mind and reading.[1] We now know more about what he came to own of the Third Edition, even how much of his set is cut and who had owned it before him.[2] It is all much as one might have expected: a patchy set, an idiosyncratic pattern of plunging in and cutting a few pages when in quest of detailed knowledge of, say, Beltane Fires or of the doctrine of the external soul in plants in volumes x and xi. The clear implication is that, by the time Yeats had purchased a Frazer of his own, his mind was fully formed, and he read to confirm what he already knew or suspected, rather than as a fresh and impressionable reader, or (much less) as a careful scholar.

Yeats read Frazer *contra* Frazer. Repeatedly he went to Frazer's splendid array of comparative evidences in order to use them to an end which flew in the face of Frazer's beliefs and conclusions. He put it all

in one phrase in 1937: "*The Golden Bough* has made Christianity look modern and fragmentary".[3] Indeed it had, but for Yeats it therefore focused the challenge to rediscover, and if possible to propagate, that which might be ancient and holistic. He thought he had found it in Irish faery belief, in the belief in ritual magic of the "Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn", in various doctrines of reincarnation, in psychical research conducted according to the best societies of the time and also with the assistance of "some fat old medium" in Soho.[4]

There can be no doubt of Yeats's project, from 1897 onwards, and even earlier, in *The Celtic Twilight* (1893).[5] It was to reconsecrate folklore and to apply syncretically a belief in magic to what became, in the end, a theory of human personality and a cyclical philosophy of history. Late in life he was to assert that there was in ancient Irish Christianity a pattern of belief which could make an "anaemic"[6] believer (such as Yeats felt himself to be) despise the practices of modern Anglicanism. "[A]ncient Ireland knew it all" (*VP* 637), and the Irish mind retained in its faith "characteristics of these older faiths that have become so important to our invention" (*VP* 837). He liked to think he was making a beginning in his work of "honouring" such ancient traditions (*VP* 837, 857).[7] Had Frazer ever lifted his head from his own research and bothered to consider the use to which his work was being put by Yeats, he would have been either amused or possibly scornful. It seems they never met: their mutual friend Edward Clodd was very discreet. And, yet, there is at least a hint that Frazer knew what was going on, even if he never commented on the work of the Irish poet.

II

It is doubtless not a coincidence that Turner's picture *The Golden Bough* meant as much to the young Yeats as it did to Frazer, but it came to stand for something rather different. It was *the* version of its subject for Yeats: "When alone and uninfluenced, I longed for pattern, for Pre-Raphaelitism, for an art allied to poetry, and returned again and again to our National Gallery to gaze at Turner's *Golden Bough* . . . ."[8] Such a picture, and pictorialism generally, in poetry, came "When the tide of life sinks low" (*Ex* 163), and pictorialism was one of the things he sought to escape in his own work. And so often in Yeats, the reaction against such tendencies was what formed his own style and approach, and Frazer's *Golden Bough* was one of a clutch of books that gave him a way out of pictorialism via folklore, whereby movement and symbolism were

perpetually embodied in narrative and the larger forms of myth. Like Frazer, he became a collector of evidences of belief. As a schoolboy he had been through a Darwinian phase, a Grant Allen and Edward Clodd phase,[9] and when he came to despise "scientific" folklore it was at least with more than a smattering of science that he did so.

Yeats's primacy as a reader of *The Golden Bough* was publicised in 1934, the year in which he published his most "Frazerian" plays in *Wheels and Butterflies*. The same year Geoffrey Bullough claimed that Yeats had been the "first to present in English poetry" a "learned symbolism, backed up by reference to the wide ranging anthropology of Sir James Frazer".[10] Undoubtedly the first to perceive (and to make use of) Yeats's breakthrough to the "mythical method"[11] was James Joyce, who saw the possibilities of *In the Seven Woods* (1903) and applied them assiduously. Eliot and Joyce take us back to the period at which Yeats's library can be of no assistance: fortunately we know from the bookish essays which pass as notes to *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) that he had been reading the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*. Accounts of his indebtedness which do not examine that book ignore Yeats's fundamental engagement with Frazer.

III

Yet, as far as we know, he did not read *The Golden Bough* before late 1897, when the first, as yet anonymous, signs of Frazerian detail enter "The Tribes of Danu", the first of six Irish faery-lore essays he was to write with Lady Gregory but publish over his own name. His book-editing and collecting of folklore, intent and unscholarly, had not so far brought him in touch with *The Golden Bough*, even though from well before 1890, as his early reviews and periodical writings show, he realised deeply the significance of folk belief and mythology for the Irish writer and he earnestly proselytised for the study of folklore. From his very first book review he showed an international perspective on such studies, insisting that each of the cycles of legends he had encountered was an imaginative "fountain", each "the voice of some race celebrating itself, embalming forever what it hated and loved". Poets returned to legends, he said, so that they might not become "lost in a world of mere shadow and dream".[12]

As Yeats became an expert on Irish folklore – he said in mid-July 1889 that he had read most, if not all, recorded Irish fairy tales (*UP 1* 139) – his sense of its value deepened, so that he could write, in "The Message

of the Folk-lorist" (1893),

> Folk-lore is at once the Bible, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer, and well-nigh all the great poets have lived by its light. Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, and even Dante, Goethe and Keats, were little more than folk-lorists with musical tongues. The root-stories of the Greek poets are told to-day at the cabin fires of Donegal; the Slavonian peasants tell their children, as they did a thousand years before Shakespeare was born, of the spirit prisoned in the cloven pine; the Swedes had need neither of Dante nor Spenser to tell them of the living trees that cry or bleed if you break off a bough. . . . It is only in these latter decades that we have refused to learn of the poor and the simple, and turned atheists in our pride. The folk-lore of Greece and Rome lasted us a long time; but having ceased to be a living tradition, it became both worn out and unmanageable, like an old servant. We can now no longer get up a greater interest in the gods of Olympus than we can in the stories told by the showman of a travelling waxwork company. And for lack of these great typical personages who flung the thunderbolts or had serpents in their hair, we have betaken ourselves in a hurry to the poetry of cigarettes and black coffee, of absinthe, and the skirt dance, or are trying to persuade the lecture and the scientific book to look, at least to the eye, like the old poems and dramas and stories that were in the ages of faith long ago. But the countless little hands are lifted and the affirmation has begun. (*UP 1* 284–5)

Quickly abandoning the idea that art is "tribeless, nationless, a blossom gathered in No Man's Land" (*E & I* 205), he came to insist that "Creative work has always a fatherland",[13] a dictum which paradoxically emerged alongside his internationalist[14] and comparatist perspective on folklore. But his attitude to scientific folklorists was sceptical.[15] Well-enough versed in current controversy to participate in the Folk Lore Society / Irish Literary Society debate between diffusionists and solar mythologists, he saw the harvest (as distinct from the analysis) of folklore as an urgent necessity, and as a preliminary to creative activity. The "Evangel of Folklore" (*UP 1* 326–8) had to be spread to new writers, Irish or not, because the poor retelling of beautiful stories by "slatternly" and sentimental book-makers (*UP 1* 138–9) was something Yeats felt he increasingly had to condemn as popular publishing of folkloric materials increased. His compelling if somewhat unselfconscious imperative was that the oral virtues of folklore demanded that it be allowed to tell itself.

His own methods were syncretic rather than comparative, and so, when he ventured into interpretation of material conveyed to him by believers in Sligo and Galway – as in the notes to his own poems – his reportage was the basis for an analysis which was, in fact, reverie.

In "Poetry and Science in Folk-lore" (1890) he argued that the scientific folklorist lacked

> the needful subtle imaginative sympathy to tell his stories well. There are innumerable little turns of expression and quaint phrases that in the mouth of the peasant give half the meaning, and often the whole charm. The man of science is too often a person who has exchanged his soul for a formula. . . . I object to the "honest folk-lorist", not because his versions are accurate, but because they are inaccurate, or rather incomplete . . . . (*UP 1* 174)

As he went on writing about folklore and its collection, Yeats's ideals became more lofty and spiritualised. Like Ernest Renan, he obliterates[16] a distinction between sacred and profane writing before then elevating profane narrative to a quasi-sacred function. This is a fundamental aspect of both men's aestheticisation of belief itself, including belief in the spiritual value of art. Yeats had at least a triple imperative. Folklore was of national cultural significance, it was the last chance to recover traces of primitive belief in magic and in a spirit world in a European race, and he happened to find such belief congruent with his own occultism. One of the most enduring aspects of Yeats's occultism is its Irishness, and one of the most determined aspects of his sense of his Irishness is his occultism.

At about the age of seventeen, he tells us,

> bored by an Irish Protestant point of view that suggested by its blank abstraction chloride of lime, I began to question the countrypeople about apparitions. Some dozen years later Lady Gregory collected with my help the stories in her *Visions and Beliefs* [*in the West of Ireland* (1920)].[17] Again and again she and I felt that we had got down, as it were, into some fibrous darkness, into some matrix out of which everything has come, some condition that brought together as though into a single scheme "exultations, agonies", and the apparitions seen by dogs and horses; but there was always something lacking. We came upon visionaries of whom it was impossible to say whether they were Christian or Pagan, found memories of jugglers like those of India, found fragments of a belief that associated Eternity with field and

> road, not with buildings; but these visionaries, memories, fragments, were eccentric, alien, shut off, as it were under the plate glass of a museum; I had found something of what I wanted but not all, the explanatory intellect had disappeared. (*E & I* 428–9; see also 513–14)

That matrix was not turned into an "ancient discipline, a philosophy that satisfied the intellect" (*E & I* 429) until Yeats had studied Indian mysticism with Shri Purohit Swāmi many years later, but occasionally he was to think for a time that it was recoverable in Ireland. It was a matrix wherein spirits continued to inhabit sacred places.[18] *The Golden Bough* provided evidences, but then so did modern studies of psychical research, such as those of Sir William Crookes or Frederic Myers.[19] That such authorities might stand in utter intellectual opposition to the traditions represented by Frazer certainly did not bother him. He was given to belief, reinforced by what he saw as sceptical inquiry, in such established and elaborate frauds or delusions such as those of Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain, who claimed to have found themselves in the Petit Trianon of Marie Antoinette and her courtiers in 1901.[20] Such synchronic adventures are the theme of plays such as *The Dreaming of the Bones and Purgatory*.

Belief to Yeats was "the spring of all action" (*Ex* 400), and myth was its vehicle. He could try, via modern ritual magic, or the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg or Jacob Boehme, or the seance room, to piece together "the floating debris of mediaeval thought" (*E & I* 515) which he claimed to find among the West of Ireland peasantry. One day he would relate the same matrix to Shintoism, or to the mysticism of the Upanishads (see *E & I* 517–18; *Ex* 30–1, 400–4), but it was to Irish folklore that he continually returned for his conviction that "natural and supernatural are knit together" (*E & I* 518). A future science would affirm ancient magical beliefs, and together they would assuredly fill out and surround the modern, fragmentary Christianity, which would come to resemble "Druidism" (*E & I* 518).

In the summers following 1896, Lady Gregory and Yeats must have made a bizarre couple collecting folklore from the workhouse in Gort, in the Slieve Echgte hills, County Clare; she with something of a local reputation as a souper, he looking frail and of a faintly repellent, priest-like aspect in his dark clothes. If we had the questions they put, we could evaluate the 200,000 words or so of answers they received much more objectively.

Perhaps we would then see that the questions were tendentious. We

would certainly see that the questioners were somewhat at cross-purposes. Yeats said, "My object was to find actual experience of the supernatural, for I did not believe, nor do I now, that it is possible to discover in the text-books of the schools, in the manuals sold by religious booksellers, even in the subtle reverie of saints, the most violent force in history." Lady Gregory is reported to have said to him, "I have longed . . . to turn Catholic, that I might be nearer to the people, but you have taught me that paganism brings me nearer still." He replied that neither she nor the peasantry was pagan, but that "Christianity begins to recognise the validity of experiences that preceded its birth and were, in some sense, shared by its founders" (*Au* 400).

These age-old experiences were those of invasion of supernatural forces into ordinary lives, of vision, of spiritual experiences, of the direct apprehension of God in mystical experience, of many minds flowing into a single mind, of a collective memory, of its evocation by means of symbolism – in short, of that which Yeats called "Magic" in his 1901 essay of that name (*E & I* 28–52).

So Frazer's book was a nodal point of reference in his own investigations, which were, unlike Frazer's own, actually in the field – Soho or County Galway. Frazer therefore turns up in "The Tribes of Danu", and is there in "Away", Yeats's central folklore essay about what was for him the principal experience to which Irish folklore was testament, that of changelings and faery brides. The Frazerian references begin as glancing comparisons; thus Frazer's account of how the image of Apollo at Hylae in Phocis "was believed to impart superhuman strength"[21] is invoked in the November 1897 essay "The Tribes of Danu" as a point of reference for those who would learn that the "Country of the Gods is called 'the Country of the Young'", because "the strength of their youth is believed to fall about those they love just as it fell about Cuchullin and other heroes in the poems, and as the strength of Apollo was believed to fall about his priests at Hylae, so that they could leap down steep places and tear up trees by the roots" (*UP* 2 64). Or, in "Away", written in 1898 but not published until 1902, one finds a direct comparison with Frazer's accounts of royal taboos in Loango and Dahomey:

> In some barbarous countries no one is permitted to look at the king while he is eating, for one is thought to be less able to drive away malicious influence when one is eating, and most mortal influence must be malignant when one is the representative and instrument of the gods. I have sometimes been told that nobody is allowed to see those who are "away" eating. A woman of Gort says of Whelan the

carpenter's son, "He's lying in bed these four years, and food is brought into the room but he never touches it, but when it's left there it's taken away." (*UP 2* 274, cf. *GB 1*, I, 161–3)

Frazer was by no means the only authority Yeats was reading, and a review of his periodical writings in the late 1890s shows the growth of his knowledge of folkloric theory. It also shows his opposition[22] to solar-myth theory. Just how he had come to Frazer is worth a digression. In *The Savoy* for April 1896 he had published as one of "Two Poems concerning Peasant Visionaries" his verses subsequently called "The Valley of the Black Pig" (*VP* 161). The poem was accompanied by a short note characteristic of Yeats's by then near-all-consuming passion for prophecies of Armageddon, the support of peasant visionaries providing a veiled occasion for him to externalise this obsession:

> The Irish peasantry have for generations comforted themselves, in their misfortunes, with visions of a great battle, to be fought in a mysterious valley called, "The Valley of the Black Pig," and to break at last the power of their enemies. A few years ago, in the barony of Lissadell, in county Sligo, an old man would fall entranced upon the ground from time to time, and rave out a description of the battle; and I have myself heard said that the girths shall rot from the bellies of the horses, because of the few men that shall come alive out of the valley.
>
> (*VP* 161)

An obsession with collecting stories of the Black Pig lasted well beyond the writing of the poem and its note, and it was one of the subjects of conversation between Yeats and Edward Clodd when they had a "good talk" about folklore on 4 April 1898. Clodd was to record in his diary that Yeats "showed me his notes on the Black Pig & we discussed many things, chiefly the equation of the fairies with the dead: Irish belief in the body & soul as immortal".[23] Yeats had met Clodd at least by the end of November 1897, and might have met him earlier.[24] Clodd, a close friend of Frazer's and President of the Folk Lore Society, had been to dinner with Yeats at Lady Gregory's on 25 November 1897. There Yeats talked to the author of *The Childhood of the World* (1873), which seems to have been the book Charles Johnston recalls Yeats reading as a schoolboy.[25]

So, if Clodd did not introduce him to Frazer's work, then he was, at least, Yeats's earliest informed discussant of its issues. Certainly, by the

time Yeats came to rewrite the "Black Pig" footnote for the poem's inclusion in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (published in April 1899), he had written a virtual essay on the battle, now seen primarily as a "mythological battle". The Black Pig itself is now identified with

> the boar that killed Adonis; the boar that killed Attis; and the pig embodiment of Typhon ("Golden Bough", II.26–31). The pig seems to have been originally a genius of the corn . . . pigs and boars grew into types of evil, and were described as the enemies of the very gods they once typified ("Golden Bough", II.26–31, 56–57). The Pig would, therefore, become the Black Pig, a type of cold and of winter that awake in November, the old beginning of winter, to do battle with the summer, and with the fruit and the leaves, and finally, as I suggest; *and as I believe for the purposes of poetry*; of the darkness that will at last destroy the gods and the world. (*VP* 809, emphasis added)

Into such a determinedly scholarly and yet conjured argument, the folk accounts are enfolded, so that Yeats can comment,

> It is possible that bristles were associated with fertility, as the tail certainly was, for a pig's tail is stuck into the ground in Courland, that the corn may grow abundantly, and the tails of pigs, and other animal embodiments of the corn genius, are dragged over the ground to make it fertile in different countries. (*VP* 809)

This allusion to *The Golden Bough*[26] is offered in all scholarly reasonableness – the boar "may have had different meanings, just as the scourging of the man-god has had different though not contradictory meanings in different epochs of the world" (*VP* 809); but Yeats is not content with comparative religion or mythography: he must go on to compare all his evidence in the service of a central statement of his own beliefs.

> I suggest that the battle between the Tribes of the Goddess Danu, the powers of light, and warmth, and fruitfulness, and goodness, and the Fomor, the powers of darkness, and cold, and barrenness, and badness upon the Towery Plain, was the establishment of the habitable world, the rout of the ancestral darkness; that the battle among the Sidhe at a man's death is the battle of life and death; and that the battle of the Black Pig is the battle between the manifest world and the ancestral darkness at the end of all things; and that all these battles

> are one, the battle of all things with shadowy decay. *Once a symbolism has possessed the imagination of large numbers of men, it becomes, as I believe, an embodiment of disembodied powers, and repeats itself in dreams and visions, age after age.* (*VP* 810, emphasis added)

Genevieve Brennan discusses at length some works of folklore which Yeats had borrowed from Clodd and which had been misdirected when being returned, in 1898. One of these was in all probability *The Golden Bough*, for Yeats, writing "Away" during that summer, allowed himself the luxury of the vague reference. This was a lordly tactic in persuasion, because the allusion could also serve as a strategy of evasion when the fissures between his own line of thought and that of his authorities were about to reveal themselves.

> Mr. Frazer discusses in, I think, the second volume of *The Golden Bough* – I am writing in Ireland and have not the book at hand and cannot give the exact reference[27] – the beating of the divine man in ancient religious ceremonies, and decides that it was never for a punishment but always for a purification, for the driving out of something. I am inclined, therefore, to consider the beating of Cuchullain [*sic*] by the smiling women, as a driving out . . . of his merely human faculties and instincts; and I am certain it should be compared with the stories told by the country people, of people over whom "the others" get power by striking them . . . and with countless stories of . . . "the touch". . . . (*UP* 2 281)

Although Yeats piles conjecture upon conjecture in a manner faintly reminiscent of Frazer's own, his overall framework would have exasperated scientific folklorists of the time because it was not intellectual but magical. And there was nothing merely nostalgic or sentimental about some of those symbolisms which Yeats believed went on working themselves into "dreams and visions, age after age". As Brennan demonstrates, one of the books Clodd had lent to Yeats (and which was mislaid) was Captain John Bourke's *Scatalogic Rites . . . A Dissertation upon the Employment of Excrementitious Remedial Agents in Religion, Therapeutics, Divinations, Witchcraft Love-Philters, etc., in All Parts of the Globe* (Washington, DC, 1891).

It was not, as she observes, a book which "could be casually borrowed".[28] Yeats was reading it to find out about fowl droppings and urine, and their efficacy as a magical remedy for recovering brides stolen by the fairies. Yeats did not sift the repulsive rites of far-off places and

times from the safety of Trinity Great Court: he and Clodd must have discussed the case of the Clonmel, County Tipperary, witch-burning of March 1895. A man there had become convinced that his wife had been stolen by the fairies and that he was sleeping with a changeling, an "old witch". "She was not my wife. She was too fine to be my wife. She was two inches taller than my wife" – or so said one Cleary, at his trial for manslaughter. Bridget Cleary of Ballyvadlea had been tortured and burnt by her husband on the assumption that she was a changeling, and Cleary was to receive a sentence of twenty years for the outcome of his psychosis. A herb doctor, Denis Ganey, had advised him; a concoction of strong urine and hen's excrement was probably flung at her, plus lamp oil, which was then lit. As she caught fire, Cleary commanded her to "go up the chimney". In the *Cork Examiner*'s account of the case, Yeats's name was mentioned:

> This appalling episode proves that fairies are not everywhere discredited . . . when the interest passes from the literary or academic domain and becomes more real and active the aspect of the question changes . . . so seriously that not even the most ardent folklorist amongst us – Dr. Hyde, Nora Hopper or Mr. Yeats for example – could defend it, strong as is their attachment to the fascinating fairyland of our country. It is one thing to write fairy tales . . . it is patriotic to stimulate interest in our beautiful folk lore. But when the fairies actually play pranks with people . . . it is time to pause. Out of such a diseased spirit grew the tragedy of which Bridget Cleary was the victim . . . .[29]

Yeats takes up the case in "Away" and later, in 1914, in his notes to *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*: it put him in something of an embarrassing position. His uncle's second-sighted servant Mary Battle offered him a way out of his dilemma: she was, he wrote, "very angry" with the Tipperary witch-burner; she could not believe in the facts of the case; but, even if they were true, they were, deplorably, the results of an excess of superstition in County Tipperary. 'In my place [Mayo] we say you should only threaten", she said (*UP 2* 277). Her commitment to reprisals symbolical rather than real gave Yeats his cue:

> In fact mankind and spiritkind each have their hostage. These explanatory myths are not a speculative, but a practical wisdom. And one can count perhaps, when they are rightly remembered, upon their preventing the more gross practical errors. The Tipperary witch-burner only half knew his belief.[30]

Congress between natural and supernatural worlds remained, then, a violent business, and Yeats's remedy is unconvincing, not least on an ethical basis. It is, however, but one practical consequence of his whole position,[31] which was opposed to Frazer's in almost every aspect except in that both men felt solar mythology to have been discredited. Frazer[32] maintained an implicitly linear, developmental theory of history, whereby magic had been replaced by religion, itself due to yield to science, the religion of the future. The pattern is the Renanian formula for deploying that *pietas* which Frazer, even at his most ironical, retains. Yeats, however, never swerved from his late-adolescent attack on science and evolution and became more and more articulate in, as he put in the Introduction to *The Resurrection*, his "myth that was itself a reply to a myth" (*VPl* 932); the myth he denied was that of progress. He sought a return of religion, by which he meant a revival of magic, confirmed if necessary by the future "science" of spiritualism. He simply denied the Frazerian development from magic to religion, and, where he recognised the change (as in the gradual dilution of Christianity), he deplored it as a diminishment.

IV

As early as July 1896, the *Irish Theosophist* under the aegis of George Russell (AE) debated "The Revival of the Lost Mysteries",[33] in which Christianity was seen not as "a system apart from Paganism" but as "a survival of some of the exoteric teachings and rites of the Pagan Mysteries of Chaldea, Egypt and Greece . . . its sacred literature contains but mutilated selections from text-books used in the secret schools centuries before the so-called Christian era". Of course, it was easy for followers of Madame Blavatsky to take a lofty attitude to the modernity of Christianity, as much of her work had striven to compare Christianity to older cults. Linguistic researches, the article proposed, would lead to restoration of secret meanings in canonical texts and thus would conclusively prove the identity of Christianity with older cults. "Only by the recognition of this fact and the restoration of that ancient system of which Christianity is only a distorted and misinterpreted fragment"[34] could Christianity escape from its own "dead letter" school and its materialist opponents, including solar mythologists, the article warned.

It would be easier to dismiss the Irish Theosophists as an isolated little cult were it not for the association of Yeats and George Russell, the one an ex-Theosophist turned magician, the other a sincere mystic with

considerable visionary powers. Together, they planned a Celtic Mystical Order, to be the focus of national spiritual life and of the Irish Revival. They engaged a number of writers, seers, and members of the Order of the Golden Dawn to engage in group experimentation, such as visions of old Irish mythology, from which Yeats began to draw up the rituals of the new order. It was to have had its headquarters on Castle Island, Lough Key, near Boyle in County Roscommon, in a deserted castle of no great antiquity but of minute charm. This was to be the Irish Eleusis or Samothrace.

The wider purpose behind the scheme was cultural renewal through the hidden power of national myth to invigorate a spiritual renaissance. A narrower purpose (from Yeats's point of view) was that the idea appealed to Maud Gonne, who was preoccupied in Paris with her complicated and declining affair with Lucien Millevoye, and her own Irish revolutionary political activities.[35] The plans drew upon the conviction shared by Yeats and Russell that every hollow and hill of Ireland had immemorial associations with the country's mythology, and that such associations could be awakened, magically or mystically, so that through the rediscovery of folklore and its narratives the country would become "a Holy Land, as it was before men gave their hearts to Greece and Rome, and Judea" (*Ex* 12–13 [1902]). The Irish might then become, wrote Yeats, a "chosen race, one of the pillars that uphold the world" (*E & I* 210 [1901]). The literalness of these aspirations is a little hard to recapture, but it was sustained by that active collection of folklore and it was blooded by Yeats's profound interest in the survival of the soul after death and his animistic beliefs in magic and spirit communication.

So it should surprise no one that the evolving rituals for the Celtic Mystical Order took a distinctly Frazerian turn. There were Yeats, Florence Farr, Dorothea Hunter and others scrying on 1 January 1898 and conjuring in group visions such figures as "the Guardian of the Wood", a being in a shining sphere in the midst of a forest of "evergreen" oaks, "the boughs twisted into fantastic and writhing shapes which would, without our guide, have forcibly opposed our way".[36] The visions were also of ceremonies in which "maidens in festive procession" bearing "white waving grasses and blossoming apple boughs" were accompanied by "music and . . . innumerable birds". The Guardian of the Wood in some visions seemed sexless, but a God and Goddess of the Wood appeared, he holding a sunflower, she a silver moon, signifying apparently "the reconciliation of female and lunar powers with male or solar powers".[37] The Irish legendary heroes paraded by before the God revealed himself to be a hybrid of Mananaan MacLir the sea god and

Aengus the god of love. But, strangely, he was wounded, like the Fisher King.[38] In another vision, on 6 January 1899, Yeats himself records the presence of the *Ur*-god Elathan, comparable to one of the kings of Hades in Celtic mythology, but associated (somewhat paradoxically) by Yeats with the sun, speech and wisdom, wounded by his own crown. The initiation of his own followers involved a ritual crucifixion.[39]

Much more work remains to be done on the reading which went into these strange experiences. Incoherent as the surviving materials frequently are, it is clear that "Frazerian" notions and narratives had entered the group consciousness of Yeats's occult circles: even such lowly productions as 'Fiona Macleod's" novel *Green Fire: A Romance* (1896) make this conclusion inescapable.[40]

V

Robert Ackerman tells us something of the cordial friendship between Frazer and Edward Clodd, who with Andrew Lang wrote *The Making of Religion* (1898) in the years between the First and Second Editions of *The Golden Bough*. Talk of a new edition began with Macmillan in 1896, the literary press was calling for it by 1898,[41] and Frazer certainly had much new material. The battle with solar mythologists was no longer his chief concern: loyalties were fissured another way. Frazer, Clodd, Yeats and Lang were all anti-solar; but, while Frazer and Clodd remained scientific in approach, Lang did not. He was an evolutionist and a "degenerationist" who believed that in various primitive societies an original monotheism had been replaced with superstitious polytheism and that magic was posterior to religion rather than, as Frazer demonstrated, anterior to it.[42] But by 1894 Lang was a member of the Society for Psychical Research and had begun to complain that scientific anthropologists were neglecting the contemporary evidence of spiritualism. It seemed to him prejudicial of Frazer, Clodd, Allen and Hartland to refuse to investigate spiritualism scientifically, and for them to dismiss it as an "inexplicable and regrettable modern survival or recrudescence of the ghost worship of savagery".[43] Clodd was to counter-attack in his 1895 presidential address to the Folk Lore Society. Ackerman summarises the speech: "any serious attention paid by scientists to psychic phenomena which were by definition delusions and frauds catering to all-too-understandable hopes and fears, only gave them a status they did not deserve".[44] "Analysed under the dry light of anthropology", said Clodd, "the 'psychism' [of the Society for Psychical Research] is seen to be only

the 'other self' of barbaric spiritual philosophy 'writ large'. It disguises the old animism under . . . vague and high sounding phrases . . . ."[45] Clodd zestfully disposed of all manner of charlatans and chicanery.[46] Lang's riposte was "Protest of a Psycho-Folklorist", in which he defended the scientific pretensions of his researchers, Lodge, Crookes, Ochorowicz, Sidgwick and others, whose writings can be found scattered through Yeats's extensive library. Lang's excuse for them was that they laboured in a very different field, but as honest scientists. Tylor was praised for going to seances, and psychical research was praised by Lang for seeking "certain obscure facts at the bottom of many folklore beliefs. Since psychical research investigates the alleged facts, as a folklorist I welcome in her as an ally." By contrast, folklorists were in danger of dropping the contemporary witness of "honourable men".[47] Clodd's "A Reply to the Foregoing Protest" was printed immediately below, criticising the methods, not the commitment, of the Society for Psychical Research. The next year in his presidential address Clodd kept up the attack: Eusapia Palladino was a fraud; Madame Blavatsky was "that colossal old liar"; Robertson Smith had been right to see ritual systems as "always materialistic".[48] The speech went on admirably to summarise Frazer's and Hartland's cases, and to extol their methods. Transubstantion was simply the "barbaric" idea of eating the god.[49]

Ackerman somewhat obscures this debate by citing the slow exposure of Lang as a closet Christian and offering that as the reason why he and Frazer drifted apart. From *The Making of Religion* (1898)[50] to his several reviews of the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough* and on to *Magic and Religion* (1902), Lang became estranged from Frazer, but it is clear from the exchanges between Clodd and Lang that intellectually the rift had been there much earlier. So, while it is clear from Ackerman's case that the work of Baldwin Spencer and Australian anthropologists working on the origins of aboriginal totemism had given Frazer his empirical basis for the distinction between magic and religion which is implicit[51] in the First Edition of *The Golden Bough* but exfoliated in the Second Edition, there was a pressing local reason for the reinforcement of the argument, and that reason was surely the recrudescence of occultism in the *fin de siècle.* Lang and the claims of the Society for Psychical Research and the quarrel over psycho-folklore were pressing potential embarrassments for folklorists, and to be equated with the tendencies Yeats and other espoused, ritual magic, and the growth of little societies dedicated to irrational beliefs of one sort or another. When Frazer embarked on his great tripartite division of human history, it was in part because the age demanded it.[52]

So the book ceased to be subtitled *A Study in Comparative Religion* and became emphatically *A Study in Magic and Religion.* Its reception, says Ackerman, included objections to its "inadequate and tendentious definitions of magic and religion",[53] but the comment is less significant as a critique of Frazer than as an indication of the liveliness of the issue at the time. The combination of sombre irony and holy dread which invests the key chapters of the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*[54] surely attests to the contemporary pressures on Frazer's case.

> It is not our business here to consider what bearing the permanent existence of such a solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society, and unaffected by the superficial changes of religion and culture has upon the future of humanity. The dispassionate observer, whose studies have led him to plumb its depths, can hardly regard it otherwise than as a standing menace to civilisation. We seem to move on a thin crust which may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below. From time to time a hollow murmur underground or a sudden spirt of flame into the air tells us of what is going on beneath our feet. Now and then the polite world is startled by a paragraph in a newspaper which tells how in Scotland an image has been found stuck full of pins for the purpose of killing an obnoxious laird or minister, *how a woman has been slowly roasted to death as a witch in Ireland*, or how a girl has been murdered and chopped up in Russia to make those candles of human tallow by whose light thieves hope to pursue their midnight trade unseen. But whether the influences that make for further progress, or those that threaten to undo what has already been accomplished, will ultimately prevail; whether the kinetic energy of the minority or the dead weight of the majority of mankind will prove the stronger force to carry us up to higher heights or to sink us into lower depths, are questions rather for the sage, the moralist, and the statesman, whose eagle vision scans the future, than for the humble student *of the present* and the past. Here we are only concerned to ask how far the uniformity, the universality, and the permanence of a belief in magic, compared with the endless variety and the shifting character of religious creeds, raises a presumption that the former represents a ruder and earlier phase of the human mind, through which all the races of mankind have passed or are passing on their way to religion and science. (emphasis added)[56]

Thus had the Clonmel witch-burning case impinged on Frazer.[56] And, if this was the gloomy spectacle of what was past and passing, what was to

come? Some would surely want to begin prognostication by contrasting the grand melancholy of Frazer's account of the discovery of the "inefficacy of magic" as "a confession of human ignorance and weakness"[57] with Yeats's 1901 essay "Magic", wherein he sets out the tenets of his belief in it and then reflects,

> I often think I would put this belief in magic from me if I could, for I have come to see or to imagine, in men and women, in houses, in handicrafts, in nearly all sights and sounds, a certain evil, a certain ugliness, that comes from the slow perishing through the centuries of a quality of mind that made this belief and its evidences common over the world. (*E & I* 28)

In 1900 then, Frazer and Yeats faced each other across an enormous intellectual chasm. On the one hand an associationist, a rationalist, with a Whig theory of history and an evolutionary model of human development, whereby in a grand triplicity priests stood on the shoulders of magicians in order to produce scientists, whose distinction from their magician forebears would be that they were right – a linear, culminative model of history. On the other, a magician with a linear apocalyptic, with his *fin de siècle* collection of prophecies of "immense wars" and a "magical armageddon":[58] "After us the Savage God" (*Au* 349). Yeats knew his apocalyptic was a critique of what to him was the Victorian "myth" of progress: one aspect of that "myth" cannot but have been Frazer. And, if Frazer's Second Edition is, as I suggest, an attempt to limit the effects of contemporary occultism, then it is a critique of Yeats.

VI

With this perspective on Yeats's early engagement with Frazer I return to the well-covered "Frazerianism" of his later work. He had purchased the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*, but it seems quite unlikely that he had read the revised pages on "Magic and Religion", certainly not before 4 November 1919. On that day, his spirit guide Ameritus instructed him through his wife's automatic writing to "read 4th on right of Golden Bough 25th page on". The instruction led to the dialogue Mrs Yeats recorded as follows (the pairs of numbers for question and answer are hers):

8. Have we found right page. 25 of vol I
8. no –4th on *right* – wrong shelf

9. page 25 vol I of Magic Art?
9. *Yes*
   See hair of Berenice 25

At this point, George Yeats inserted a note into the automatic script which read, "on looking up page 25 of Vol I Magic art we find many pages of offering of hair to God or Godess[59] – Pages *cut* but book 2nd hand – WBY no memory of having read & I no memory of ever having opened or seen book". Yeats immediately posed a new question:

10. Why Berenice – who is not mentioned in Golden Bough except note in Vol VI
10. look up Berenice – goodbye[60]

And so Ameritus left the Yeatses thinking they should cut their way through volume VI (having proved that they could use the General Index). But, if Ameritus had read the 1914 text, it was, as we have seen, the volume they did not even have,[61] so the relation of Frazer's note on Berenice to Yeats's poems "Her Dream" and "Veronica's Napkin" (*VP* 519, 483)[62] remains obscure and doesn't matter here. The incident admirably demonstrates how the Yeatses used their set of Frazer.

The great theme in the later Yeats for which the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* provided so many exempla is the nature of the miraculous as it occasionally or periodically invades natural life, personal or public. So, in writing such poems as the "Supernatural Songs" Yeats will set Frazer alongside, say, Myers' *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* and use the conjunction to comment upon obscure aspects of the creed of St Patrick, to vindicate what he sees as common ground between Christian and pre-Christian patterns of belief in miracle (*VP* 837; *E & I* 514). There are three interrelated topoi in which the subject is demonstrated, and all of them were on his mind when he began composing in what has come to be known as the "Great Vellum Notebook" in November 1930.[63] That book contains working drafts of his poem "Vacillation", the redrafting of *The Resurrection* and its introduction, alongside his working notes on Attis and Dionysos taken from Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*,[64] as well as historical notes for and working versions of his most Frazerian poem, "Parnell's Funeral", amid much else. This notebook offers the reader an exploded

view of Yeats's mind at work on mythic and historical material: it is the matrix out of which much of his greatest work has come.

The first of these topoi is the personal sense of blessedness, meditated upon in several poems, of which "Vacillation" is the greatest. It is undeniable that Yeats, on a rare number of occasions in his life, felt that he had indeed had some kind of *mystical* experience. He noted them precisely and defined them narrowly. They were sudden and inexplicable, but direct, apprehensions of the presence of God. Such overwhelming experiences[65] – he was a student of the writings of St Teresa of Ávila[66] – brought him face to face with the question "Should I become a Christian?" and "Vacillation" addressed the question at length before dismissing it firmly:

> My fiftieth year had come and gone,
> I sat, a solitary man,
> In a crowded London shop,
> An open book and empty cup
> On the marble table-top.
>
> While on the shop and street I gazed
> My body of a sudden blazed;
> And twenty minutes more or less
> It seemed, so great my happiness,
> That I was blessèd and could bless.
>
> (*VP* 501)

The poem asks at the outset "What is joy?" before impressing onto an Attis allusion the burning tree from the story of Peredur in the *Mabinogion*:[67]

> A tree there is that from its topmost bough
> Is half all glittering flame and half all green
> Abounding foliage moistened with the dew;
> And half is half and yet is all the scene;
> And half and half consume what they
> renew,
> And he that Attis' image hangs between
> That staring fury and the blind lush leaf
> May know not what he knows, but knows
> not grief.
>
> (*VP* 500)

Even Frazer's own account of the self-mutilation of the followers of Attis is not more understated: "When the tumult of emotion had subsided, and the man had come to himself again, the irrevocable sacrifice must often have been followed by passionate sorrow and lifelong regret."[68]

The point is that Yeats was always ready to absorb into his own self-narrative, or "phantasmagoria", to use his own word, images or icons drawn from discrete narratives and widely divergent sources. Perhaps the narrative of a Frazer was simply too overpowering and did not leave enough gaps in its heavily encrusted detail to allow for a perspective as different as Yeats's was. Anyway, Yeats as poet needed his own version of the comparative method which Frazer had so elaborately built up. Caught up in his meditation too is Baron Friedrich von Hügel's *The Mystical Element of Religion as studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends*,[69] and the outcome of the poem is that Frazer, as it were, saves Yeats from orthodox Catholicism, but not for athiesm or agnosticism, but for a "predestined part" in some as yet undefined, spiritual, but "unchristened" revelation.

> Must we part, Von Hügel, though much alike, for we
> Accept the miracles of the saints and honour sanctity?
> The body of Saint Teresa lies undecayed in tomb,
> Bathed in miraculous oil, sweet odours from it come,
>
> . . .
>
> . . . I – though heart might find relief
> Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief
> What seems most welcome in the tomb – play a predestined part.
> Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.
> The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture said?
> So get you gone, Von Hügel, though with blessings on your head.
> (*VP* 503)

So many of the poems of *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) – such as "Oil and Blood", "Veronica's Napkin", "The Crazed Moon", "The Mother of God" – balance pagan with Christian manifestations of the miraculous that Yeats and Frazer are joined in enterprise though opposed in belief right through the book. Nor is it always Frazer's work which supplies the initial *donnée* for a poem. There is, for example, Yeats's "Adonis" poem, "Her Vision in the Wood", rich in ostensibly "Frazerian" detail:

> Dry timber under that rich foliage,
> At wine-dark midnight in the sacred wood,
> Too old for a man's love I stood in rage
> Imagining men . . . .
>
> (*VP* 536–7)

But the inspiration for the *tableau vivant* which follows, as the "beast-torn wreck" of Adonis's body is brought in on a litter, derives ultimately from Yeats's earliest, proto-Frazerian encounter with just such a cavalcade of pagan rites in Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine.*[70]

In "Byzantium" Yeats develops the second topos which comes from his thinking about miracle: personal immortality. It is well known that the poem grew from Thomas Sturge Moore's dissatisfaction with that golden bird on the golden bough of "Sailing to Byzantium", which had seemed to him a mundane and trivial image for immortality,[71] and in the second poem Yeats envisions the blood-soaked soul factory where natural and supernatural are seen to be far more intimately and cyclically inter-involved: the golden bird, "Planted upon the star-lit golden bough", is now asserted to be "more *miracle* than bird or handiwork" (*VP* 497). Sturge Moore's challenge called upon all Yeats's invention: simultaneously it is Yeats's most spiritualistic and "blood-begotten" tableau.

VII

Miracle and its relation to blood naturally led Yeats back to Frazer's pages. World and Irish history had forced him to contemplate what he called the "growing murderousness of the world" (*Au* 192) and to propose "some violent annunciation" in "Leda and the Swan" and other poems which presuppose an incarnation, "some movement from above" (*VP* 828) inaugurating the vast historical changes in epochs which dominate both versions of *A Vision.* Attempting to find meanings in blood sacrifice was a hazardous enterprise in a country where it is all too easy to realise such sacrifice or to live in its myth, as did Patrick Pearse. Nevertheless, it is unsurprising that "Parnell's Funeral" should have taken shape in the pages of the Great Vellum Notebook with its Frazerian themes. Yeats had not gone to Parnell's funeral on 11 October 1891 but had heard from Maud Gonne, who had been there, of a "star that fell in broad daylight as Parnell's body was lowered into the grave": was it, Yeats wondered in his note to this poem, "a collective hallucination or an actual event?" (*VP* 834). He went to much trouble to associate the symbolism

of the event with a vision of his own, of 1896, the so-called "Archer Vision" (see *Au* 372ff, 576ff), but, despite the massive array of detail[72] Yeats assembled to explicate this wonder, one thing was pre-eminent: the symbolic relation in which Parnell stood to his time, and the significance of his fall made him seem to Yeats like a great tragedian

> a brighter star shoots down;
> What shudders run through all that animal blood?
> What is this sacrifice? Can someone there
> Recall the Cretan barb that pierced a star?
>
> Rich foliage that the starlight glittered through,
> A frenzied crowd, and where the branches sprang
> A beautiful seated boy; a sacred bow;
> A woman, and an arrow on a string;
> A pierced boy, image of a star laid low.
> That woman, the Great Mother imaging,
> Cut out his heart. Some master of design
> Stamped boy and tree upon Sicilian coin.
>
> An age is the reversal of an age:
> When strangers murdered Emmet, Fitzgerald, Tone,
> We lived like men that watch a painted stage.
> What matter for the scene, the scene once gone:
> It had not touched our lives. But popular rage,
> *Hysterica passio* dragged this quarry down.
> None shared our guilt; nor did we play a part
> Upon a painted stage when we devoured his heart.

Parnell had been no mock king and his death no mock death, but an Irish tragedy. Yeats, speaking for the nation which destroyed its uncrowned king, "thirst[s] for accusation". But, amid the self-contempt, Yeats yet finds room for a further stanza of self-critique, in which Parnell is seen as the solitary Irish Rex Nemorensis, and as the last inheritor of that Anglo-Irish loneliness passed on from Swift:

> The rest I pass, one sentence I unsay.
> Had de Valéra eaten Parnell's heart
> No loose-lipped demagogue had won the day,
> No civil rancour torn the land apart.

Had Cosgrave eaten Parnell's heart, the land's
Imagination had been satisfied,
Or lacking that, government in such hands,
O'Higgins its sole statesman had not died.

Had even O'Duffy – but I name no more –
Their school a crowd, his master solitude;
Through Jonathan Swift's dark grove he
passed, and there
Plucked bitter wisdom that enriched his blood.
(*VP* 541–3)

Only Frazerian grand theory could provide a complex-enough model, while yet being of epic simplicity and of cyclical remorselessness, by which the fall of Parnell and its historical consequences could be measured. That fall and those consequences had shaped, in Yeats's view, the pattern of events – including the Easter Rising and its executions, the Troubles, the Civil War – which had been Irish history in his own lifetime. And the poem had arisen during Yeats's deepest contemplation of Frazer's work, after he had revised his play *The Resurrection.*

In the midst of the notes on Attis, Adonis and Osiris in the Great Vellum Notebook, Yeats inscribed a reference to p. 257 of the single *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* volume he owned. He went to Frazer not only for details of the Attis cult: one imagines he had been able to get more than he needed (if not all that he wanted) on that subject from Hastings. The particular reference (on p. 129 of the Notebook) was to the official dates of the celebration of the death and resurrection of Attis in Rome, i.e.

> the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of March, the latter being regarded as the spring equinox, and therefore as the most appropriate day for the revival of a god who had been dead or sleeping throughout the winter. But according to an ancient and widespread tradition Christ suffered on the twenty-fifth of March, and accordingly some Christians regularly celebrated the Crucifixion on that day without any regard to the state of the moon.[73]

A footnote carried a dissenting view, of St Martinus Dumiensis, Bishop of Braga, that the crucial date celebrated not the Crucifixion, but the Resurrection, and it may well have been that view which Yeats chose to adopt in order to give him the juxtaposition he needed for his play *The Resurrection*, in which Christ appears to his disciples gathered in the

upper room just as the festival of Dionysos reaches a climax with *his* "resurrection", an event derided by Yeats's Greek doubter: "The worshippers of Dionysus are coming this way again. They have hidden the image of the dead god and have begun their lunatic cry, 'God has arisen! God has arisen!" (*VPl* 927). Yeats had prefaced his play with the song beginning,

> I saw a staring virgin stand
> Where holy Dionysus died,
> And tear the heart out of his side,
> And lay the heart upon her hand
> And bear that beating heart away;
> And then did all the Muses sing
> Of Magnus Annus at the spring,
> As though God's death were but
> a play.
>
> (*VPl* 903)

Yeats needed the simultaneity of pagan and Christian events just as Frazer had understatedly insisted that "it is a remarkable coincidence, if it is nothing more, that the Christian and the heathen festivals of the divine death and resurrection should have been solemnised at the same season and in the same places", i.e., "at the vernal equinox".[74]

Yeats's Hebrew, Greek, and Syrian observe the state of the city, and take the measure of the crestfallen disciples. The Greek is the key observer: in his view, Christ too has been but a phantom. He only "seemed to be born . . . seemed to die" (*VPl* 909). The Hebrew thinks Christ had been a real man who had deluded himself into thinking he was the Messiah. The febrile atmosphere of the unpoliced Dionysian festival is assembled with loving care from details from *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild.*[75] Meanwhile the Syrian returns with the news of Christ's resurrection: "What if there is always something that lies outside knowledge, outside order? What if at the moment when knowledge and order seem complete that something appears. . . . What if the irrational return? What if the circle begin again?" (*VPl* 925).

As it does. As Christ appears, the Greek touches his side. His hand will tell whether the apparition is real, material or immaterial, statute or phantom. He finds a beating heart. God's death has both been a play and not a play, the notion[76] probably having come from the conjecture that Frazer had advanced in the Second Edition[77] that Jesus had been chosen to play the part of Haman at the feast of Purim, which in the

year in question coincided with the annual Passover festival. The hypothesis put Jesus firmly on a par with such dying and reviving gods as Attis, Dionysos and Adonis:

> Pilate had to give way: Christ was crucified and Barabbas set at liberty. Now what, we may ask, was the reason for setting free a prisoner at this festival? In the absence of positive information, we may conjecture that the gaol-bird whose cage was thrown open at this time had to purchase his freedom by performing some service from which decent people would shrink. Such a service may very well have been that of going about the streets, rigged out in a tawdry splendour with a tinsel crown on his head and a sham sceptre in his hand, preceded and followed by the tag-rag and bobtail of the town hooting, jeering, and breaking coarse jests at his expense, while some pretended to salaam his mock majesty, and others belaboured the donkey on which he rode.[78]

This section of the Second Edition, "in a high degree speculative and uncertain"[79] was relegated to a note in *The Scapegoat*,[80] but it is, as Ackerman says, the "rhetorical highwater mark" of Frazer's thought.[81] Yeats's copy of *The Scapegoat* has escaped from the library; proof that he read the passage is therefore suspended, but he can hardly fail to have been impressed by Frazer's evocation,

> All over Western Asia from time immemorial the mournful death and happy resurrection of a divine being appear to have been annually celebrated with alternate rites of bitter lamentation and exultant joy; and through the veil which mythic fancy has woven around this tragic figure we can still detect the features of those great yearly changes in earth and sky which, under all distinctions of race and religion, must always touch the natural human heart with alternate emotions of gladness and regret, because they exhibit on the vastest scale open to our observation the mysterious struggle between life and death. . . . A man, whom the fond imagination of his worshippers invested with the attributes of a god, gave his life for the life of the world; after infusing from his own body a fresh current of vital energy into the stagnant veins of nature, he was cut off from among the living before his failing strength should initiate a universal decay, and his place was taken by another who played, *like all his predecessors, the ever-recurring drama of the divine resurrection and death.* Such a drama, if our interpretation of it is right, was the original story of Esther and

> Mordecai or, to give them their older names, of Ishtar and Marduk. It was played in Babylonia, and from Babylonia the returning captives brought it to Judaea, where it was acted, rather as an historical than a mythical piece, *by players who, having to die in grim earnest on a cross or gallows, were naturally drawn rather from the gaol than the green-room.* A chain of causes which, because we cannot follow them, might in the loose language of daily life be called an accident, determined *that the part of the dying god in this annual play should be thrust upon Jesus of Nazareth*, whom the enemies he had made in high places by his outspoken strictures were resolved to put out of the way. They succeeded in ridding themselves of the popular and troublesome preacher; but the very step by which they fancied they had simultaneously stamped out his revolutionary doctrines contributed more than anything else they could have done to scatter them broadcast not only over Judaea but over Asia; for it impressed upon what had been hitherto mainly an ethical mission the character of a divine revelation culminating in the passion and death of the incarnate Son of a heavenly Father. In this form the story of the life and death of Jesus exerted an influence which it could never have had if the great teacher had died, as is commonly supposed, the death of a vulgar malefactor. (Emphasis added)[82]

"He that dies is the chief person in the story", Yeats remarks elsewhere,[83] or, as Frazer puts it with his "sceptic's" circumspection, "the fortunate accident of his execution invested [Jesus] with the crown, not merely of a martyr, but of a god". Both Frazer and Yeats would have agreed: *Magna est veritas et praevalebit.*[84] Yet they looked at *that* truth from opposing perspectives, as ever. For Yeats the irrational *had* returned: the presence of the supernatural is registered by a beating heart in a phantom. *The Resurrection* is his most awesome incarnation of this central message; the extrapolation of Frazerian ritual from the annual seasonal cycle to Magnus Annus, to a theory of history in which the irrational does return at the very moment that knowledge and order seem complete, is his final transumption of Frazerian rationalism. In Yeats's cycle, science will reconfirm magic. The cosmic drama of his mind could not have been so compelling had he not used Frazer against himself to offer a vision of history which is a *theatrum mundi.* All of his work, he remarked to Sturge Moore, relied upon the "rooting of mythology in earth",[85] and *The Golden Bough* was something he sought to replant as his own way of making sense of modern savagery. Being Irish he could not trust in Frazer's "thin crust" of civilisation. Believing

in 1937 that civilisation had arrived at the point where Caesar is killed, he remained convinced that "Man's own resinous heart" – the pine cone of Attis – had fed, and would continue to feed, "Whatever flames upon the night" (*VPl* 931).

NOTES

References to the following editions of writings by Yeats are, where convenient, given in the text and consist of abbreviation plus page number(s).

Au	*Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955).
E & I	*Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961).
Ex	*Explorations*, selected by Mrs W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962).
Myth	*Mythologies* (London: Macmillan, 1959).
UP 1	*Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, I: *First Reviews and Articles, 1886–1896*, ed. John P. Frayne (London: Macmillan, 1970).
UP 2	*Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, II: *Later Reviews, Articles and Other Miscellaneous Prose, 1897–1939*, collected and ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (London: Macmillan, 1975).
VP	*Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957, rev. and corrected 1966).
VPl	*Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Russell K. Alspach, assisted by Catherine C. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1966).

The following further abbreviations, for works by or relating to Yeats, are used only in the notes below.

AV A	*A Critical Edition of Yeats's "A Vision" (1925)*, ed. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood (London: Macmillan, 1978).
AV B	Yeats, *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1937).
YL	Edward O'Shea, *A Descriptive Catalogue of W. B. Yeats's Library* (New York and London: Garland, 1985).

1. But see, however, James Lovic Allen, "The Golden Bird on the Golden Bough: An Archetypal Image in Yeats's Byzantium Poems", *Diliman Review* (University of the Philippines), April 1963, pp. 168–221; Jacqueline Genet, "Du mythe agraire de Frazer à la poesie de Yeats ou la recréation des mythes de Dionysus et d'Attis", *Cahiers d'études victoriennes et édouardiennes* (Montpellier), nos 9–10 (October 1979), 219–39; Joseph M. Hassett, "'The Crazed Moon' and the Myth of Dionysus", in Warwick Gould (ed.), *Yeats Annual No. 5* (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 232–37; also Vickery (pp. 179–232), who omits treatment of *The Resurrection* and whose claims of influence are too wide and unfocused.
2. From *YL* we know that Yeats owned of Frazer's other books *The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead* (London: Macmillan, 1913 [*YL* no. 695, mostly uncut]); and *Folk-lore in the Old Testament: Studies in*

Comparative Religion, Legend and Law, abridged edn (London: Macmillan, 1923 [*YL* no. 696, mostly uncut; cut pp. 49–65; 136–45]). Yeats's set of the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* had belonged to Ananda and Ethel Coomeraswamy, and the various volumes and the annotation are described in *YL* nos 697–703. See also pp. 138, 143–4. Vol. IX, *The Scapegoat*, is missing, and vol. v is the one-volume 1907 edition of *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*.

3. In his Preface to *The Ten Principal Upanishads* put into English by Shree Purohit Swāmi and W. B. Yeats (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), p. 10.
4. "Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places", *Ex* 30.
5. *The Celtic Twilight: Men and Women, Dhouls and Faeries* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893). When revised for the 1902 version published by A. H. Bullen, much new folklore had been incorporated. The version currently in print in *Myth* has been greatly altered and cut.
6. 'I am too anaemic for so British a faith' (*AV B* 7).
7. "I am convinced that in two or three generations it will become generally known . . . that natural and supernatural are knit together . . . that . . . we must study a new science [spiritualism] . . . at that moment Europeans may find something attractive in a Christ posed against a background not of Judaism but of Druidism, not shut off in dead history, but flowing, concrete, phenomenal. I was born into this faith, have lived in it, and shall die in it" ("A General Introduction for my Work", *E & I* 518).
8. *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*, *Au* 81.
9. As recalled by Charles Johnston, Yeats "when he should have been studying the Olynthiacs, pored instead over Grant Allen and Edward Clodd, gathering arrows for the fray" – quoted in E. H. Mikhail (ed.), *W. B. Yeats: Interviews and Recollections* (London: Macmillan, 1977) I, 7. It is also more than likely that, during his time at Fountain Court with Arthur Symons in 1895–6, he would have read Grant Allen's Frazer-inspired translation of Catallus's *Attis* (1892), Catullus being a taste Yeats and Symons shared. His own verse was publicly compared, in October 1892, by his friend Lionel Johnson, to Catullus's *Attis*, where "the monstrous barbaric frenzy of the theme is realised in a verse of the strictest beauty. It is not a Latin theme, congenial to a Latin nature: it is Asiatic, insane, grotesque, its passion is abnormal and harsh. Yet the poem, while terrible in its intensity of life, is a masterpiece of severe art. It is in this spirit, if I may dare so great a comparison, that Mr Yeats has written . . ." – Johnson's review of *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* in *The Academy*, 1 October 1892, repr. in A. Norman Jeffares (ed.), *W. B. Yeats: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 80.
10. In *The Trend of Modern Poetry* (1934), quoted from Jeffares (ed.), *W. B. Yeats: The Critical Heritage*, p. 345.
11. T. S. Eliot's well-known phrase. See "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth", *The Dial*, November 1923; repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 177–8.
12. "The Poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson – 1", first published in *The Irish Fireside*, 9 October 1886, and quoted from *UP 1* 81.
13. "Cosmopolitan literature is, at best, but a poor bubble, though a big one". See "Mr William Wills", *Boston Pilot*, 3 August 1889, in *Letters to the New Island*, ed. Horace Reynolds (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 74.

14. See for example his article "The Ainu" (1893), a review of B. D. Howard's *Life with Trans-Siberian Savages*, in *UP 1* 295ff; or "Greek Folk Poesy" (1896), *UP 1* 409–12.
15. See "Poetry and Science in Folk-lore" (1890), *UP 1* 173–4.
16. The idea is Irving Babbitt's. See *The Masters of Modern French Criticism* (London: Constable, 1913), p. 259.
17. Much of the material in the six faery-lore essays and also that added to the second edition of *The Celtic Twilight* (1902) finds fuller expression in *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, collected and arranged by Lady Gregory, with two essays and notes by W. B. Yeats, Coole Edition, with a foreword by Elizabeth Coxhead (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1970).
18. "Once a friend of mine was digging in a long-neglected garden and suddenly out of the air came a voice thanking her, an old owner of the garden . . . long since reborn, yet still in the garden . . . the Irish countrywoman did see the ruined castle lit up, the bridge across the river dropping . . . the gamekeeper did hear those footsteps the other night that sounded like the footsteps of a stag where stag has not passed these hundred years. All about us there seems to start up a precise inexplicable teeming life, and the earth becomes once more, not in rhetorical metaphor, but in reality, sacred" (*Ex* 369).
19. Yeats owned Sir William Crookes's *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, repr. from the *Quarterly Journal of Science* (London, 1874 [*YL* no. 449]). "A modern man, *The Golden Bough* and [F. W. H. Myers,] *Human Personality [and its Survival of Bodily Death* (London: Longman, 1903)] in his head, finds much that is congenial in St. Patrick's Creed as recorded in his Confessions" (*E & I* 514).
20. C[harlotte] Anne E[lizabeth] Moberley and Eleanor F[rances] Jourdain, *An Adventure* (London: Faber and Faber, 1911). Yeats owned a copy of the 4th edn (1934 [*YL* no. 1327]).
21. *GB 1*, I, 37.
22. When reviewing Kuno Meyer and Alfred Nutt, *The Voyage of Bran* (London, 1895, 1897) he discussed Nutt's essays "The Happy Otherworld" and "The Celtic Doctrine of Re-birth" in terms of H. D'Arbois de Jubainville's *Le Cycle mythologique irlandais, et la mythologie irlandais* (Paris, 1884) and Sir John Rhys's *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Celtic Heathendom* (London, 1886), concluding that Nutt's argument "is the argument of Mr. Frazer's 'Golden Bough' applied to Celtic legends and belief, and being itself a deduction from peasant custom and belief, and not, like the solar myth theory, from the mythology of cultivated races, it must always look for the bulk of its proofs and illustrations to peasant custom and belief." Yeats was not prepared to allow, as he felt Nutt to allow, any "accommodating spirit" towards solar mythology, and consciously sided himself with Andrew Lang and Frazer against it – "Celtic Beliefs about the Soul" (September 1898), *UP 2* 118–21. This review provides Yeats's first extant mention of Frazer, but, as we have seen, he had been reading him for more than a year.
23. Edward Clodd's manuscript diary, quoted from Genevieve Brennan, "Yeats, Clodd, Scatalogic Rites and the Clonmel Witch Burning", in Warwick Gould (ed.), *Yeats Annual No. 4* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 207–15.

24. If it *was* Clodd who introduced Yeats to *The Golden Bough*, then they must have met while Yeats was still writing "The Tribes of Danu", published in the November 1897 issue of the *New Review*.
25. Brennan, in *Yeats Annual No. 4*, p. 207. See also above, n. 9.
26. *GB 1*, II, 28.
27. *GB 1*, II, 201–2, on the scapegoat as a "divine man" who is "nothing more than . . . a vehicle".
28. Brennan, in *Yeats Annual No. 4*, p. 210.
29. Ibid., pp. 211–12.
30. *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, p. 360.
31. When derided in the press in 1898 for writing merely "the dream of a poetical folk-lorist", Yeats riposted that the Irish peasant "has invented, or has had invented for him, a vague, though not altogether unphilosophical, reconciliation between his Paganism and his Christianity". See *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 297. Yeats's conception of this reconciliation turned on the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. "[B]lind educated Ireland" could not see "how the old religion . . . made of the coming and going of the greenness of the woods and of the fruitfulness of the fields . . . lives side by side with the new religion which would trample nature as a serpent under its feet; nor is that old religion faded to a meaningless repetition of old customs, for the ecstatic who had seen the red light and white light of God smite themselves into the bread and wine at the Mass, has seen the exultant hidden multitudes among the winds of May . . ." (*UP 2* 56–7; see also *UP 2* 275, *AV A* 202, *AV B* 291, *E & I* 513–14).
32. In the First Edition of *The Golden Bough* Frazer had relatively little to say about Irish myth or folklore. The tradition of inquiry when Yeats began his researches was much more given to solar-myth theory, e.g. in the works of Sir John Rhys or of Eleanor Hull. Nevertheless Frazer's work was to be applied to Irish myth by Yeats's friend Father William Barry, who considered the story of Diarmuid and Grania (which Yeats and George Moore were to try to turn into a play: see *VPl* 1168ff) in terms of Frazer's examination of the myth of Virbius (*Quarterly Review*, July–October 1894, pp. 207ff; Deirdre Toomey alerted me to this article). Barry also wrote *Ernest Renan* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), which included a treatment of "Le Prêtre de Nemi".
33. *Irish Theosophist*, IV, no. 10 (15 July 1896), 201–4.
34. Cf. Yeats's comment in note 7 above, and see also "Away" (*UP 2* 274–5) on the "pagan mystery" of the "substitution of the dead for the living" in changeling cases – not, according to Yeats, "more hard to understand than the substitution of the body and blood of Christ for the wafer and wine in the mass; and I have not yet lost the belief that some day, in some village lost among the hills or in some island among the western seas . . . I will come to understand how this pagan mystery hides and reveals some half-forgotten memory of an ancient knowledge or an ancient wisdom. Time that has but left the lesser gods to haunt the hills and the raths, has doubtless taken much that might have made us understand."
35. "Our Castle of the Heroes remained a Castle in the Air, but the last time I saw Willie . . . as we said goodbye, he, sitting in his armchair from which he

could only rise with great effort, said, 'Maud, we should have gone on with out Castle of the Heroes, we might still do it.' I was so surprised that he remembered, I could not reply" – Maud Gonne, 'Yeats and Ireland", in Stephen Gwynn (ed.), *Scattering Branches: Tributes to the Memory of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 24–5.

36. See Lucy Shepard Kalogera, "Yeats's Celtic Mysteries" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1977), pp. 125–6.
37. Ibid., p. 128. The imagery, which is also alchemical, might derive ultimately from Lady Wilde's *Ancient Cures, Charms and Usages* (London, 1890), pp. 101–2. See A. Norman Jeffares (ed.), *Yeats's Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 501–2, note on "The Song of Wandering Aengus".
38. Kalogera, "Yeats's Celtic Mysteries", p. 132.
39. Ibid., pp. 152, 250.
40. The Celtic Mystical Order had no monopoly of such materials among occultists. The great *farceur* Aleister Crowley wrote under the pseudonym Mark Well a story called "The Priest of Nemi" published in *The International* (New York), April 1918. It was included in a collection which Crowley saw into proofs entitled *Golden Twigs*, but he died before he could complete the work.
41. See "In Appreciative Mood: 1. Mr. J. G. Frazer", *The Academy*, no. 1352 (2 April 1898), 376.
42. Ackerman, pp. 150–1.
43. Ibid., p. 152.
44. Ibid.
45. *Folk-lore*, VI (1895), 79.
46. Including the sale by the Society for Psychical Research of glass balls for the purposes of scrying. They cost 3s. each. Yeats had received a letter from Lang in 1898 telling him that "half the population" of St Andrews could "scry in glass balls". The letter is misdated in *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy (London: Macmillan, 1977), I, pp. 66–7.
47. *Folk-lore*, VI (1895), 241, 247.
48. *Folk-lore*, VII (1896), 39, 41.
49. Ibid., p. 45.
50. Yeats marked his copy of the Second Edition (1900); see *YL* no. 1085.
51. See Ackerman, p. 165, on the classification in the First Edition of *The Golden Bough* of "magic as a low form of religion".
52. See Ackerman, p. 157.
53. Ibid., p. 158.
54. For a full discussion of the changes Frazer made for the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*, see Robert Fraser, *The Making of "The Golden Bough": The Origins and Growth of an Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1990), ch. IX: "The Progress of the Mind".
55. *GB2*, I, 74–5.
56. His source was "The Witch-burning at Clonmel", *Folk-lore*, VI (1895), 373–84.
57. *GB2*, I, 75.
58. See *Au* 336; and *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, I: *1865–1895*, ed. John Kelly and Eric Domville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 477. For

a discussion of Yeats's collections of prophecies at the time see Marjorie Reeves and Warwick Gould, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 244–5 and nn.

59. The page in question does indeed deal with offerings of hair to Hippolytus.
60. The episode is given verbatim in George Mills Harper, *The Making of Yeats's "A Vision": A Study of the Automatic Script* (London: Macmillan, 1987), II, 343–4.
61. See above, note 2.
62. For Frazer's note see *GB 3*, VI, 35. The source for Yeats's interest in Berenice's "burning hair" (the constellation) is likely to have been Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Treasure of the Humble*, tr. Alfred Sutro (London, 1897). Yeats had reviewed the volume for *The Bookman* in July 1897: see *UP 2* 45–7. On p. 175 he would have found "the last limits of the kingdom of love transcend perhaps the scarcely visible flames of Mira, Altair or Berenice's tresses".
63. The Notebook was sold to Colin Franklin at Sotheby's, on Monday, 22 July 1985: see Warwick Gould, "Yeats's Great Vellum Notebook", *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4345 (26 July 1985), 824.
64. James Hastings and John A. Selbie *et al.*, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 12 vols (Edinburgh: T. & C. Clark, 1908–11); see *YL* no. 855.
65. See *Myth* 68–9, 347–8, 365; *Au* 378–9; also Reeves and Gould, *Joachim of Fiore*, pp. 268–9.
66. See *YL* nos 2116–20 for his collection of her works and books about her.
67. See also *E & I* 176. Yeats's source was Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London , 1891), p. 161. See *YL* no. 55, also no. 1166.
68. J. G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (London: Macmillan, 1907), p. 225.
69. 2 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1927 [*YL* no. 929]).
70. Yeats read it, probably in early 1896, in the translation of D. F. Hannigan, published as *The Temptation of Saint Antony* (London, 1895 [*YL* no. 682]). The key passage is where all the sects parade before the saint: see especially pp. 249–53, where an erstwhile lover of Adonis whom Antony compares to "the mother of Jesus" singles herself out from the funeral procession to weep over his body. The corresponding tableau of Attis (pp. 247–9 offers further analogies), and the whole procession of pagan gods and cults, including Diana and Virbius, amounts almost to a Frazerian drama.
71. See *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence 1901–1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), pp. 162, 164.
72. On which see Allen, in the *Diliman Review*, April 1963.
73. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, p. 257.
74. Ibid., p. 259.
75. *GB 3*, VII, 14–18. Much of the detail is already present in *GB 1*, I, 320–9.
76. Deirdre Toomey alerted me to this parallel.
77. *GB 2*, III, 197–8.
78. *GB 2*, III, 192–3.
79. *GB 3*, IX, 412n.
80. *GB 3*, IX, 417.
81. Ackerman, p. 169.
82. *GB 3*, IX, 421–2.

83. *AV A* 10.
84. *GB 3*, IX, 423.
85. *Yeats and Sturge Moore: Correspondence*, p. 114.

VIII

KILLING THE DA: SYNGE AND *THE GOLDEN BOUGH*

Deirdre Toomey

DURING 1897–8 J. M. Synge was engaged in a heroic daily reading programme: Keats, Shelley, Rossetti, Yeats, Pater, Renan, Flaubert, Dante, Swedenborg and Paracelsus are all noted in his pocket diary.[12] This was the extraordinary cultural underpinning of a narrow, highly focused talent. Yeats was later to recall that Synge had never praised any "writer, living or dead, but some old French farce-writer" (*Au* 512), but this silence did not indicate a cultural deficiency. The literary work which Synge produced at this time, "Vita Vecchia", "Étude Morbide", tended towards an exhausted Pre-Raphaelitism, drifting towards decadence and employed in the service of under-processed biographical material.[2]

His reading of Romantic and post-Romantic literature provided no satisfactory model for his own writing. Yeats described Synge's early work as being like "a man trying to look out of a window and blurring all that he sees by breathing upon the window" (*Au* 344). Later Synge was to tell Yeats that style came from "the shock of new material".[3] It is usual to interpret this powerful claim as a reference to his first experience of the Aran Islands in May–June 1898, a visit which had been urged upon him by Yeats. But Synge's "new material" was not merely the primitive, indeed archaic, life of the islanders; it was also anthropology.

On 12 September 1898 Synge began to read the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*, probably in the National Library, Dublin (*MS Diary*). He had already begun serious anthropological reading: he had read E. S. Hartland's *Perseus*[4] before going to the Aran Islands. Synge read Frazer for a week, finishing on 17 September. His notes on *The Golden Bough* survive and indicate a competent and objective grasp of Frazer's argument (*TCD MS* 4378, fos 57–4). The notes begin with chapter II and are analytic as well as specific:

> Whenever it is supposed that Nature is bound up with the life of the King or priest he becomes a source of infinite blessing and *danger*.

His death may mean the end of the world. This King exists for his *subjects*. The more powerful the more tabooed. [*GB 1*, I, 114–16]

Synge notes the "marks of primitive religion":

(1) no priests proper
(2) no temples
(3) spirits not gods are recognised
Names general not proper
(4) the rites are magical rather than propitiatory [*GB 1*, I, 348]

He also notes specific facts, particularly concerning taboo:[5]

Death = *absense* of the Soul > taboos . . . Fear of blood which has the animal soul if it falls to the ground the ground tabooed. [*GB 1*, I, 121, 179]

Synge's notes demonstrate a full absorption of *The Golden Bough*: he makes a heroic effort to summarise the over-compressed, slippery and contradictory arguments of *Balder the Beautiful*.

Modern traces of old Celtic sacrifices. Snakes burned in wicker frames. Druids cut miseltoe at midsummer eve? Compare Balder. Myth from rites, Balder representative of being burnt at fire festivals = tree spirit. conception of vegetation too abstract to the primitive. Hence tree sp. refs of particular tree. Oak sacred tree of the aryans worshipped by Celts and Slavs, used for lighting sacred fire. Balder myth Balder = oak miseltoe and his life must be pulled out before the oak can be cut. [*GB 1*, II, 223–96]

Synge's response to this contact with anthropology was immediate. In late 1898 he began a second draft of autobiography which overtly and indeed obsessively employs an anthropological frame of reference:

If – as I believe – we find in childhood perfect traces of the savage, the expression of a personality will reveal evolution from before history to beyond the science of our epoque . . . I was [when a child] a sort of poet with the frank imagination by which folk lore is created. I imagined myself half human monsters that went through a series of supernatural adventures . . . We were always primitive . . . We talked of sexual matters with an indifferent and sometimes amused frankness

> that was identical with the attitude of folk tales. We were both superstitious, and if we had been allowed . . . we would have evolved a pantheistic scheme like that of all barbarians. . . . The monotheistic doctrines seem foreign to the real genius of childhood. . . . The feeling of primitive people is still everywhere the feeling of the child; an adoration that has never learned or wished to admire its divinity. (*CW*, II, 3–13)[6]

The identification of animism – "pantheistic" – as the prime religion would suggest that this draft of autobiography is Synge's first literary response to Frazer, which its place in his notebook would support. What is remarkable about this fragment is not just the way in which childhood experience is viewed and assessed in terms of evolutionary anthropology, but that the material quoted is part of a very brief text: the theoretical frame dominates the memories which it interprets.

Synge's background was, despite the implications of this memoir, rigidly evangelical. Missionaries abounded in the family, which was deracinated Protestant gentry, washed up in little enclaves in the outer suburbs of Dublin. His mother and grandmother, who educated him at home, believed in the literal truth of the Bible and were "concerned with salvation, not with . . . society which, according to their belief, was to remain under the dominion of the Evil One until the second coming of Christ".[7] Physical indications of affection were repressed and all elaboration of language was thought to be sinful; "so strict was [the] rule that it almost paralysed language as an expression of feeling".[8] The theatre was of course the domain of Evil. The family had no contact with those who did not share their doctrines; they viewed non-evangelical Protestants as decadent and Catholics as pagan. It was a "closed society", socially, culturally and ideologically. Synge had an adolescent crisis of belief – a response to the implications of *The Origin of Species* – which caused him great distress. Atheism had seemed to him to be monstrous and "incest and parricide were but a consequence of the idea that possessed me" (*CW*, II, 11).[9] With considerable courage and obduracy he subsequently made his position clear to his family when he became a student at Trinity. He continued, however, to live in an atmosphere of unqualified fundamentalism until his departure for Germany in 1894. His lack of faith caused his mother great distress; she continued to pray for his "conversion" and was desperate enough to derive comfort from a supernatural message received via Yeats.[10] The tension between Synge's background and his beliefs was heightened by his first love affair. Cherrie Matheson, with whom he remained in love for several years, was from

an even more rigid background – her family were Plymouth Brethren – and she rejected Synge on doctrinal grounds in 1896.

To a man such as Synge, who had emerged from a "closed society", anthropology, with its assurance of moral and cultural relativism, must have been a consoling and liberating discipline. His probable response could be deemed to have been more typical of modern reactions than that of Yeats. It was undoubtedly Yeats who had encouraged Synge to read Frazer (he was using the work to draft notes for *The Wind Among the Reeds* in 1898), but the two friends' responses would have been polarised. Yeats saw and continued to see in the expanding *Golden Bough* evidence for a universal, multitudinous supernatural life. Synge, in flight from religious belief, would have found Frazer's destabilisation of Christianity impossible to mistake, even in the subtle, oblique First Edition. The strength of Synge's antagonism to Christianity is evident in early work such as "Vita Vecchia", in which the protagonist decides not to commit suicide but to preserve his life "for a crusade against the crude force [of] Christianity" (*CW*, II, 19). This hostility was persistent: even when pressed by his fiancée, Molly Allgood, he refused to admit to any religious belief.[11] Synge's background would have made him hyper-alert to Frazer's subversive use of biblical quotation and allusion; thus to a reader such as Synge a passage such as "If we ask why a dying god should be selected to take upon himself and carry away the sins and sorrows of the people . . ."[12] would instantly summon up – as Frazer intended – "which taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). To a sceptical reader saturated in the Bible from infancy, the hidden message would have been clear.

The Golden Bough offered Synge not only the consolations of relativism, but also contact with a writer of immense narrative and dramatic powers and remarkable empathy[13] with the most apparently alien and rebarbative modes of human thought and behaviour, qualified by a distancing irony. For Synge, the experience of reading Frazer after living on Aran with people whose beliefs were in part pre-Christian and whose mode of life was barely agricultural must have been enlightening and transforming, each experience reinforcing the effect of the other and multiplying the effect – even if only half consciously. I would argue that *The Golden Bough* gave Synge an *imprimatur* to explore with confidence and without apology or euphemism, the darker side of Irish folk life which attracted him so strongly: "the . . . relish of delightful sympathy with the wildness of evil . . . [of] Satanic or barbarous sympathies" (*CW*, II, 6).

Although *The Aran Islands* was not published until 1907, the bulk of the text was complete by 1901. In this work, I believe, we see the

consequences of Synge's anthropological reading. Up to this point literary response to the islands had been culture-bound, and thus politicised. An Ascendancy writer such as Emily Lawless in her novel *Grania*[14] presents the life of the islands in relentlessly negative and hostile terms. The Aran men are condemned as cruel, violent, drunk and primitive. The heroine drowns in horrible circumstances, but this death is presented as a happier alternative to married life on the islands. Nationalist representations of Irish peasant life always involved a degree of euphemism and idealisation. Although Yeats himself condemned this politically motivated treatment of Irish life – "The Irish democratic party . . . had made the virtues of the Irish peasant canonical, to mock those virtues was to mock Ireland herself"[15] – he succumbed to it in his use of the Aran Islanders and West Irish peasants in his various drafts of *The Speckled Bird.*[16] The islanders and the Galway fishermen are refined into folk icons, simple, pious, noble, full of traditional wisdom. Yet in *The Aran Islands* Synge was able to steer his way between the Scylla of Ascendancy hostility and the Charybdis of Nationalist idealisation, with, I suggest, the assistance of a conception of cultural relativism derived from Frazer and Hartland. Thus he was able to describe the very qualities of Aran life and character, which Lawless identifies only to condemn, without judgement and without the distortions of idealisation. Heavy drinking, "passionate rage", vindictiveness, casual cruelty to animals, "pagan desperation", "contempt for the law" are neutrally displayed. Synge repeats the celebrated story of the man who killed his father but who was protected by the islanders: his only qualifying remarks involve, first, the hostility in the West to British justice and the resultant universal sympathy for the criminal, and, secondly, the "primitive" character of the people themselves, "never criminals yet always capable of crime" (*CW*, II, 95).[17]

When the Moon Has Set, Synge's first complete play, was written c. 1900–3 and was rejected by Yeats and Lady Gregory as "morbid and conventional" (*CW*, III, 155). The "conventional" element is its dramatic model, Ibsen, filtered through such works as Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* – patently the source for the decayed Irish country-house setting. The "morbid" element is Synge's vehement attacks upon religion, which represent his idiosyncratic contribution to Irish Ibsenism. In these attacks, Synge both engages in score-settling with Cherrie Matheson and an over-crude manner discharges some of his reading of Frazer in the service of atheism and autobiographical *esprit d'escalier.* The hero, Colm – a projected fantasy version of Synge – responds to Eileen's plea, "It is simpler to believe in God" with "I will believe in millions of them if you like" (*CW*, III, 168). In another early draft Colm lectures Eileen

on the failure of the "Christian synthesis":

> The synthesis has fallen. The imagination has wandered away to grow puissant and terrible again, in lonely vigils where she sits and broods among things that have been touched by madmen and things that have the smell of death on them and books written with the blood of horrible crimes. (*CW*, III, 176)

The books written "with the blood of horrible crimes" which has helped to overthrow the "Christian synthesis" and revive the imagination sound very much like *The Golden Bough*. In the final version, the play concludes with what can only be described as a Frazerian wedding: Colm, having succeeded where Synge failed, symbolically marries Eileen.

> We have incarnated God, and been a part of the world. That is enough. [*He takes her hand.*] In the name of the Summer, and the Sun, and the Whole World, I wed you as my wife. (*CW*, IV, 177)

One cannot be surprised that Yeats and Lady Gregory rejected the play: the attacks on religion would have made it absolutely unproducible in Ireland and Synge's obsessions are too aggressively and naïvely displayed. The Frazerian material lies on the surface of the work as part of a frustrated rant, an attack by Synge on his part and the culture from which he had emerged – or escaped.

In *Riders to the Sea*, Synge's first successful play,[18] the primal experience of Aran is fused with his reading of Hartland's *Perseus*, rather than of Frazer. The thesis of *Perseus*, a work written very much in the shadow of *The Golden Bough*, is that human sacrifice to water or to water gods was once widespread, and that in the hundreds of variants of the Perseus motif in folktales a record of this ancient practice survives. Synge took only a page of notes from this vast three-volume work, but that he grasped the Perseus motif is evident: on Aran in May 1898 he was able to identify a long story told to him by Pat Dirane as "Perseus melanges" (*MS* Diary).[19] In his notes, Synge isolates the motif of sacrifice: "Dragon = Crocodile or other bestial god to which human sacrifices are made?" (*TCD MS* 4378, fo. 39v).[20] Another work written in the shadow of Frazer which Synge read in 1898 was Alfred Nutt's *The Voyage of Bran*,[21] again probably recommended by Yeats, who had reviewed it in September 1898. Nutt, in an extended essay glossing the text, argued that the Irish belief in the changeling is a folk memory of an ancient period of agricultural religion and human sacrifice. Nutt pointed out that

in such religions the youngest and healthiest must die: "It is now a commonplace of our studies that sacrifice was reckoned efficacious in proportion to the vitality of the victim" and added that each family had to supply its quota of victims and that the sickly and the old were rejected.[22] This argument was absorbed by Yeats, who later (in "Away", 1902) wrote of changeling belief,

> This substitution of the dead for the living is indeed a pagan mystery, and not more hard to understand than the substitution of the body and blood of Christ for the wafer and the wine in the mass; and I have not yet lost the belief that some day, in some village lost in the hills or in some island among the western seas . . . I will come to understand how this pagan mystery hides and reveals some half-forgotten memory of an ancient knowledge or of a an ancient wisdom. (*UP2* 275)

Synge took very extensive notes from *The Voyage of Bran* – sixteen full pages in his 1898 notebook (*TCD MS* 4378, fos 53–47). I would argue that the conception of the "pagan mystery" of ancient Irish agricultural religion is celebrated in *Riders to the Sea*, in which one family gives its "full quota of victims" to the "bestial god" of the sea: "I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house – six fine men . . . but they're gone now the lot of them" (*CW*, III, 21). Maurya's profound fatalism and her refusal to accept the consolations of Christianity – "It's little the like of [the priest] knows of the sea" – impressed readers and audiences from the outset. Yeats frequently referred to the play's Aeschylean character, and a hostile although perceptive critic, Patrick Pearse, directly attacked its pre-Christian ideology: he saw it as representing humanity as being "in the hands of some strange and unpitying God. A sinister and unholy Gospel."[23]

It could be argued that Synge did not need anthropological literature in order to present life on Aran with its constant tragedies, its "paganism", its despair. There is certainly a contrast with *When the Moon Has Set*, in which Frazerian material obtrudes as part of hero's anti-Christian rant. In *Riders to the Sea* anthropological concepts underpin the play rather than lie on its surface. They also provided a licence to present Aran life "as it was" – a matter that brought with it some political difficulties.[24] Declan Kiberd, in his discussion of Synge's folklore reading, assumes that Synge used Frazer *et al.* simply as quarries for specific folk beliefs, and he has analysed the play's saturation with such beliefs with great thoroughness.[25] But the *frame* which gives the play its archaic sempiternal quality derives from the larger theses of anthropology. The family is

presented as being *compelled* to sacrifice the youngest and healthiest members to the "bestial god" and it is within this framework that the specific instances of folk belief are contained. Synge derives universality from anthropology; the Aran Islanders are not merely isolated pathetic primitives, "passive in suffering" (Yeats, *E & I* 336) – the view common to Ascendancy Ireland – but survivals of a once universal high culture.

In his next three plays Synge continued to explore the lives of those marginal people in whom he delighted: tramps, in *The Shadow of the Glen*; beggars, in *The Well of the Saints*; and tinkers, in *The Tinkers' Wedding*. There was a considerable Nationalist critique of *The Shadow of the Glen*,[26] which Arthur Griffith attacked as being un-Irish and derived from a well-known folktale, "The Widow of Ephesus". When Griffith renewed his attack in 1905, on the play's second production, Yeats wrote a belligerent defence of the play and its source material, pointing out that similar folktales were to be found in many different countries (*UP2* 332–3). Synge wrote a simple letter to the *United Irishman*, Griffith's journal, enclosing Pat Dirane's version of the tale, later published in *The Aran Islands*.[27] These rumblings of Nationalist discontent were to climax with the first production of *The Playboy of the Western World* in January 1907.

From Frazer Synge had absorbed the thesis that violence and murder were once elevated to the centre of human culture and had noted the survival of these ancient rites in peasant and folk customs: "The custom of the peasant probably a survival of human sacrifice" (*TCD MS* 4378, fo. 57). In September 1898 when Synge read the second page of *The Golden Bough* – "He was a priest and a murderer; and the man for whom he looked was sooner or later to murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead" – he had just returned from a region where murderers and criminals were harboured and protected; I would suggest that in this conjunction his conception of the criminal/murderer as culture hero was born.[28]

In *The Playboy of the Western World* a dishevelled, ragged, hungry vagrant arrives at an isolated shebeen in Mayo, near the Belmullet peninsula. The area was one of the "congested districts" in which the cultivable land was insufficient to support the population. The scene-setting dialogue indicates that the harvest has been bad and human fertility is in decline; Pegeen Mike contemptuously lists the feeble or deranged young men of the district: "this place where you'll meet none but Red Linahan, has a squint in his eye, and Patcheen is lame in his heel, or the mad Mulrannies were driven from California and they lost in their wits" (*CW*, IV, 59).

Her fiancé, Shawn, is a castrated figure, whom she evidently despises. When Christy Mahon, dirty and exhausted, enters, it is rapidly established that he is a criminal; this leads to an increased respect from his audience which reaches its climax when he announces that he has killed his father. The attitude of the listeners is now deferential, adulatory – he is immediately granted privileges, including that of spending the night alone in the shebeen with Pegeen Mike, the most desirable unmarried girl in the area: "we'd do all and utmost to content your needs". The criminal has become a king – despite his bewildered cry "The like of a king, is it!" Pegeen insists,

> You should have had great people in your family, I'm thinking, with the little small feet you have, and you with a kind of a quality name, the like of what you'd find on the great powers and potentates of France and Spain . . . you should have been living the like of a king of Norway or the Eastern World. (*CW*, IV, 79, 83)

In the morning Christy is treated as an agricultural deity by the village girls, who come with an offering of "first fruits". They examine his clothes and try on his boots, to them imbued with *mana*. A cancelled draft makes this blatant: "and you in the boots of a man has killed his da. . . . And you're thinking you'd give your life and all to have the strings out of them itself to lace your Sunday stays" (*CW*, IV, 96).[29] When Christy enters they present him with duck's eggs, a pullet, butter and a cake: "Till the first fruits have been offered to the deity or the king, people are not at liberty to eat of the new crops."[30] His "sacredness" is presented in burlesque form: Sara asks him, "Is your right hand too sacred for to use at all?" (*CW*, IV, 99). As the scene progresses the women compete more openly for his favour and encouraged by this Christy gives an enhanced and heroic account of the murder of his father:

> With that the sun came out between the cloud and the hill, and it shining green in my face. "God have mercy on your soul," says he, lifting a scythe; "or on your own," says I, raising the loy. . . . I hit a blow on the ridge of his skull, laid him stretched out, and he split to the knob of his gullet. (*CW*, IV, 103)

This image of the sun "coming out green" to illuminate the killing gives a ritual dignity to Christy's new version of his action:[31] it possibly carries a half-conscious reminiscence of Frazer's account of the mistletoe as "an emanation of the sun's fire".[32] Despite the reappearance of his "murdered

da", Christy's status increases. Like other "temporary kings" he is given his pick of women – the Widow Quin and Pegeen compete for him. The sterility from which the region has suffered seems at an end. Christy triumphs at the local games, wins a fiddle, a blackthorn stick and bagpipes and is offered Pegeen in marriage by her father. It is indeed a folk version of Frazer's "Killing the God in Mexico":

> the young man roamed the streets . . . carrying flowers and playing the flute. All who saw him fell on their knees before him and adored him . . . four damsels, delicately nurtured . . . were given him to be his brides. . . . Everywhere there were solemn banquets and balls.[33]

With the re-entry of old Mahon, Christy is transformed from a temporary king into a scapegoat – "isn't it by the like of you the sins of the whole world are committed?"[34] In the final version of the play this question is asked by Old Mahon, but in earlier drafts it was the condemnation of the whole village (*CW*, IV, 161–2)

> If we ask why a dying god should be selected to take upon himself and carry away the sins and sorrows of the people, it may be suggested that in the practice of using the divinity as a scapegoat we have a combination of two customs. . . . Now, if it occurred to people to combine these two customs, the result would be the employment of the dying god as a scapegoat . . . since he had to be killed at any rate, people may have thought that they might as well seize the opportunity to lay upon him the burden of their sufferings and sins . . . .[35]

Frazer details the "merciless" treatment of scapegoats in primitive communities: "The crowds who accompanied her cried 'Wickedness!' 'Wickedness!' . . . The body was dragged along in a merciless manner, as if the weight of all their wickedness was thus carried away."[36]

Christy is dragged across the floor of the shebeen, beaten, cursed, reviled; the villagers make an attempt at hanging him and Pegeen Mike burns him with a lighted sod of turf. It is a typical scapegoat drama, in which all the accumulated misery of the villagers' lives, the poverty and hopelessness of their situation, is vented upon the Scapegoat. Synge noted when reading *The Golden Bough* a "transference of evil misfortune laid upon the dying god. Scapegoats, Sin eaters Expulsion of evil spirits becomes periodic scourging the god a purification" (*TCD MS* 4378).

Frazer emphasises the importance of *beating* the scapegoat and the connection between such ceremonies and social disasters – plague and

famine.[37] Old Mahon exclaims, when Christy appeals to God, "Leave troubling the Lord God. Would you have him sending down droughts, and fevers, and the old hen and the cholera morbus?" (*CW*, IV, 163). The victim has to be tortured and beaten before being killed, so that all evils can be driven out: "Pull a twist on his neck, and squeeze him so. . . . Lift a lighted sod will you and scorch his leg. . . . You're blowing for to torture me" (*CW*, IV, 169).

To prepare for this scene Synge has emphasised throughout the play the poverty of the area. That the play is set at *harvest* time is not accidental. Michael, Pegeen's father, refers to the "broken harvest" – that is, to a disastrous harvest. The "harvest hundreds", referred to by both Pegeen and the Widow Quin are labourers who have finished harvesting in Mayo and are travelling to England to harvest there. The land is hopelessly poor; Christy refers with some shock to the "stony scattered fields" – he comes from the richer province of Munster. The regular references to Belmullet in the play locate the area precisely. Belmullet and surrounding parts of the Mayo coast had suffered a famine in 1898:[38] there had been deaths directly attributable to starvation and many small farmers had been driven to abandon their useless holdings.[39] When Christy, on arriving at the shebeen, begins to gnaw a raw turnip – the food of the desperate in rural Ireland – Michael's response is, "You're wanting [i.e. starving], maybe?" Christy replies, "There's many wanting" (*CW*, IV, 69). In a draft version of the play, Pegeen Mike refers to the area as "a place of famine" (*CW*, IV, 150). To an Irish audience of 1907, the name "Belmullet" would still have carried associations of famine.

However, it was this scene which aroused perhaps the greatest indignation among Nationalists; for the peasant violence shown here was read by them in terms of political history, particularly the Land War – the agrarian violence which had erupted in the 1880s. This had led many English and Unionist commentators to delineate the Irish peasant as a wholly brutish, violent figure.[40] The Nationalist paradox was that those activists who at this time had abandoned any hope of Home Rule and who were committed to "physical force", i.e. armed insurrection against British rule, at the same time objected to literary attempts to present Irish peasants as capable of violence. Thus, by contrast with *The Playboy of the Western World*, Yeats and Lady Gregory's play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (*VPL* 214–31),[41] which presents a picture of mild peaceful Irish peasant life transformed by the insurrection of 1798, was enthusiastically received by Nationalists. *Cathleen ni Houlihan* was the normative Nationalist drama in which there is complete separation between revolutionary violence and ordinary peasant life. The hero, Michael

Gillane, is represented as incapable of killing a fly, let alone hamstringing a ewe. There is an almost Racinean avoidance of on-stage violence: Gillane is summoned to fight the British by a *mythic* figure and there is a quasi-supernatural element in his transformation from meek domesticated farmer to revolutionary fighter. Thus the play satisfied the polarised and paradoxical demands of Nationalism. The final on-stage violence in *The Playboy of the Western World* aroused strong resentment: one journalist significantly suggested that Mayo peasants were being represented as "Cannibals".[42]

Another aspect of the play which aroused Nationalist anger was the presentation of women. "They wished to silence what they considered a slander upon Ireland's womanhood. Irish women would never sleep under the same roof with a young man without a chaperon, nor admire a murderer, nor use a word like 'shift'" (Yeats, *E & I* 311). W. G. Fay, the first Christy Mahon, asked Synge to modify the characters of both Pegeen Mike and the Widow Quin: "I begged him to make Pegeen a decent likeable country girl . . . and to take out the torture scene in the last act . . . ."[43] Synge refused. The conventional gender dynamic is pointedly askew. From the outset we find ourselves in the world of strong, even violent women and weaker, subordinated men. Pegeen Mike, a twenty-year-old woman, rules her father and is described in terms of her capacity for violence – "a fine, hardy girl would knock the teeth of any two men in the place" – and it is her threat to hit Christy with a broom which elicits his "confession". In early drafts of the play Pegeen's violence towards Christy at the *dénouement* is uninhibited: "I'll make garters of your hair. . . . Oh Lord God put some stick into my hand till I raise a ruddy welt across his scheming jaw" (*CW*, IV, 160). The Widow Quin, referred to by Pegeen as "that murderer", is thought to have effected her husband's death by hitting him with a rusty pick – "a sneaky kind of murder". Earlier drafts dwell on the circumstances of this "murder": "[Widow Quin:] a great story of the way I killed himself. . . . [Pegeen:] She hit him a blow with a rusted pick the way she had him with a blue bruised back on him . . . and in the long run the rusted poison did corrode his blood . . ." (*CW*, IV, 88). The play is constructed around an inverted sexual dynamic which in no way reflects Synge's own experiences in the West. In an early draft, Pegeen Mike tells Christy, "women is worst young fellow, any fool knows that" (*CW*, IV, 82). Even Old Mahon, represented in Christy's narrative as a threatening Oedipal father, is manipulated and belittled by the Widow Quin.

In his Frazer notes Synge wrote, "Girls isolated, Kings ditto", referring to *GB 1*, II, 224–43. Here Frazer argues that the tribal seclusion of girls

at puberty – often in huts isolated from the main village – was an indication of their power, of the dangerous influences which emanated from them, comparable to the influence emanating from the Divine King: "In short, the girl is viewed as charged with a powerful force which, if not kept within bounds, may prove the destruction both of the girl herself and of all with whom she comes in contact" (p. 242). One point which is emphasised in the play is the isolation of both Pegeen and the Widow Quin: Pegeen complains of her loneliness in the shebeen separated from the village by a river, and the Widow Quin refers to her "hut . . . far from all sides". The Widow Quin emerges late in the drafts of the play (originally there was no strong older woman, only a village girl called Sally Quin). In effect they are one woman at two stages;[44] Quin is Pegeen Mike a decade on, husband and children dead. The violence which is still in part potential in Pegeen has been realised in Quin. Their bilaterally symmetrical struggle for possession of Christy emphasises their identity, "two fine women fighting for the likes of me" (*CW*, IV, 93): both are "phallic women". I would argue that some licence to represent women as stronger, more violent, and in *control* of rural, agricultural life came from Synge's reading of cultural anthropology. He might well have interpreted the sections of the first *Golden Bough* dealing with Aphrodite and Adonis, Demeter and Proserpine, Attis and Cybele, and Isis and Osiris as evidence for an ancient matriarchal period; that such a reading was mistaken is beside the point. What he could have retained was the sense of the subordination of the young male divinity to the female divinity expressed in Frazer's powerful narratives of Attis, Adonis and Osiris.[45] Why Synge should be attracted to such a shift in sexual dynamics is a distinct question.

Synge grew up in a "matriarchal society", subordinated to unquestioned female authority in the persons of his mother and grandmother. The subject of his attitude to women remains a can of worms. Yeats and other friends testified to the fact that Synge valued women above men and was at his best in female company: that he saw little point in exerting himself in conversation with men. However, in his emotional life he retained attitudes seemingly incompatible with the creation of Nora Burke and Pegeen Mike. His anxious censorship of Molly Allgood's behaviour with her male colleagues in the Abbey Theatre – he was deeply hurt when she allowed an innocuous young actor to teach her to ride a bicycle – taints his letters to her. In a letter written shortly after the death of his mother he accuses "People like Yeats who sneer at old fashioned goodness and steadiness in women" of robbing "the world of what is most sacred in it" – a wholesome sentiment with which the

Nationalist critics of *The Playboy* would have been in full accord.[46] Yet on another level, like the young Yeats, he was attracted to "lawless women without homes and without children" (*Au* 64).

Synge's early death effected a shift in Nationalist attitudes to his work and he came to be seen by Patrick Pearse, once his most hostile critic, as a scapegoat figure, who had been sacrificed for Ireland. Pearse, never one to avoid the imagery of blood sacrifice, wrote in 1913, "When a man like Synge . . . uses strange symbols which we do not understand, we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him."[47] Pearse was himself, according to Bulmer Hobson, obsessed with the figure of the scapegoat: "He was . . . full of curious Old Testament theories about being the *scapegoat* for the people, and he became convinced of the necessity for a periodic blood sacrifice to keep the National spirit alive."[48]

In *The Golden Bough* Synge did not find the basis for what Eliot was to term the "mythical method":[49] it is not my argument that Synge plundered *The Golden Bough* for rich mythic decorations with which to dress up a story of Irish peasant life – so that Christy and Pegeen could enjoy an enhanced status as Corn King and Queen. Such a manoeuvre would have been novel and remarkably sophisticated in 1907, but it would also have been a subtly offensive version of that idealisation which Synge sought to avoid. Synge in 1898 did not read Frazer, as Eliot was to later, as a mythopoeic work of great service to the enterprise of modernism. He read *The Golden Bough* as a *scientific* work much as we might read, say, Godfrey Lienhardt's *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). *The Golden Bough* did in Eliot's words "make possible what was impossible" – but not in Eliot's sense of providing a vast mythic underpinning to an apparently anarchic or formless work "to make the modern world possible for art". Frazer "made possible what was impossible" for Synge by providing a grand theory which legitimised the presentation of "primitive" Irish peasant life. Thus, in *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge presents not ritual drama, but a drama which represents the folk remnants of an archaic tradition – "The custom of the peasant probably a survival of human sacrifice" (*TCD MS* 4378, fo. 57) – and ties the fragments of an ancient rite to the real circumstances and authentic passions of small farmers in the West.

NOTES

References to Synge's published and unpublished writings are, where convenient, given in the text. See notes 1 and 2 for details of sources and abbreviations. Also included in the text are a number of Yeats references, citing *Autobiographies* (*Au*), *Essays and Introductions* (*E & I*), *Uncollected Prose*, II (*UP 2*) and the *Variorum Edition of the Plays* (*VPL*). Full details of these are given in the list of abbreviations heading the notes to essay VII.

1. Synge's manuscripts are to be found in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. They are quoted with the permission of the Agent of the John M. Synge Trust and the Board of Trinity College, Dublin. Except for the diaries (*TCD MS* 4418–19) which are cited as "*MS Diary*", they are henceforth cited in the text by number, following the abbreviation *TCD MS*". Following quotations from Synge's notes on *The Golden Bough*, the passage summarised is identified in *square* brackets.
2. All citations from the works of Synge are taken from the *Collected Works*, general ed. Robin Skelton, 4 vols (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1982), hereafter cited as *CW*. For "Vita Vecchia" and "Étude Morbide", see *CW*, II, 16–36.
3. W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 105.
4. Edwin Sidney Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus: A Study of Tradition in Story, Custom and Belief*, 3 vols (London: David Nutt, 1894–6). It is unlikely that he owned these volumes, but he was already familiar with the text by May 1898 (*MS Diary*, 27 May 1898).
5. The reading of Frazer would have illuminated the Irish texts dealing with the heroic period which he was studying; this area of Synge's reading is thoroughly covered by Declan Kiberd in *Synge and the Irish Language* (London: Macmillan, 1979). There was an elaborate system of taboos or *geassa* in ancient Ireland: Cuchulain in particular was encumbered with a series of taboos relating to his totem animal, the dog. *Cú* is Irish for "dog".
6. Alan Price's dating of the first draft of this autobiography is 1896–8, but I assume from internal evidence in the notebook that it was begun on his return from Aran. This extract is assembled from Price's transcriptions of *TCD MS* 4382 and 4353.
7. Edward Stephens, *My Uncle John* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 28.
8. Ibid., p. 45.
9. It is surely significant that, when Synge presents this crisis after having read Frazer and Hartland, he calls up such archaic crimes to express his sense of fear of the non-Christian world. It seems unlikely that these crimes would have occurred spontaneously to a boy of fourteen or fifteen.
10. Stephens, *My Uncle John*, p. 136.
11. Yeats, *Memoirs*, pp. 214–15.
12. *GB1*,II,206.
13. It was Frazer's empathy as well as his assumption that primitive peoples concerned themselves with the solution of intellectual problems which earned the contempt of later functional anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard.

14. Emily Lawless, *Grania: The Story of an Island*, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1892).
15. W. B. Yeats, *The Irish National Theatre* (Rome: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1935) Published separately, as an extract from *Atti del IV Convegno della "Fondazione Alessandro Volta". Tema: Il Teatro Drammatico*. (Rome: Reale Accadema d'Italia, 1934), pp. 386–92.
16. W. B. Yeats, *The Speckled Bird*, ed. W. H. O'Donnell (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976). The earliest drafts of the novel are set in Aran and, even when the locus shifts to the Galway mainland, Aran is still a presence in the work.
17. The only significant example of self-censorship that I have noted involves an example of cruelty of an animal by a child. Synge refers briefly in the second section to a small child's casual cruelty to some kittens (*CW*, II, 111). In his Aran notebook (TCD MS 4385) he wrote a fuller account, assessing quite objectively his own more urbanised and sentimental response to the child's behaviour – Synge rescued the animal and hid it under his waistcoat. As he gives many examples of the islanders' cruelty to animals, his suppression of this incident perhaps involves a wish not to present *himself* too sentimentally.
18. Although Synge brought this play and *The Shadow of the Glen* to Coole in September 1902, it is clear that the former is the earlier in date of composition.
19. The story is given in *The Aran Islands*, I (*CW*, II, 84–7), and is, as Synge states, a version of the Perseus motif.
20. The point is taken from Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, III, 69–94.
21. *The Voyage of Bran*, 2 vols (London: David Nutt, 1895, 1897). The text of the poem was edited and translated by Kuno Meyer.
22. Ibid., II, 231.
23. Review in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 9 February 1907.
24. The inhabitants of both the Aran Islands and Achill Island had, for a considerable period in the earlier part of the century, suffered the ministrations of Protestant missionaries. Evangelical clergymen, who looked on the inhabitants as pagans, comparable with "natives of Africa", established missions on the islands in order to convert the natives. Edward Nagle, who established the Achill mission, admitted when questioned by a House of Lords Select Committee that the island had been peaceful and relatively free from crime or vice before he arrived, but that since then violence and social disorder had broken out (*Education in Ireland*, 1837). Nagle converted few of the thousands of islanders and incurred – possibly incorrectly – charges of coercion and cruelty, especially during the famine. Synge's uncle, the Revd. Alexander Synge, had been a missionary on Aran in the mid-century. The contempt for the integrity of the islanders' lives and beliefs implicit in such activities was not forgotten by Nationalists. Thus anyone who sought to present the Aran Islanders as "pagan" risked being identified with the ideology which had produced such colonial activities. The subject remained very sensitive.
25. Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, pp. 163–8.
26. In fact two cast-members resigned because of the play's alleged slander on Irish rural womanhood, and Maud Gonne staged a walk-out at the first performance.

27. *The Collected Letters of J. M. Synge*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), I, 106.
28. An early draft of the play was frankly entitled *The Murderer (a farce)*. While Synge was on Aran the Irish papers reported, in grisly detail, a son's murder of his father with a shovel (*Freemans Journal*, 23 June 1898).
29. See *GB 1*, I, 113, 168–9.
30. *GB 1*, I, 373.
31. The meaning of "green" here is not clear. Synge could be using "green" as a synonym for "pale" (there is no identifiable Hiberno-English usage of "green") but it is just as possible that he is engaging in a rather odd bilingual pun. The Irish for "sun" is *grian*, pronounced "green", so that to a bilingual listener Christy is saying, "the Sun shone Sun in my face". A similar example of linguistic playfulness is found in *The Well of the Saints*: a village is called "Grianan" which means sun-bower, or in modern usage summer house or even conservatory. But the heroic aspect given to the narrative of the murder by the appearance of the "green sun" remains Frazerian in its associations.
32. *GB 1*, II, 368.
33. *GB 1*, II, 219.
34. This question is usually glossed in terms of an interpretation of Christy as a Christ-figure; he is also – because of the "killing" of his father – compared to Oedipus. These types obviously exist, but the advantage of a Grand Theory, such as Frazer's is that its frame can contain many separate instances of a dying god / scapegoat – Cuchulain, Christ or even Oedipus.
35. *GB 1*, II, 206.
36. *GB 1*, II, 196.
37. See *GB 1*, II, 212ff.
38. References to the recent end of the Boer War – "the thousand militia . . . walking idle through the land" (*CW*, IV, 63) – would suggest that the play is set in 1902.
39. Maud Gonne had travelled to the Belmullet peninsula in early 1898. She addressed public meetings and wrote several articles for the Dublin papers in early March describing the famine. Synge was on friendly terms with Maud Gonne at the time – he spent the afternoon of 13 February 1898 with her. By then she had already begun to plan relief schemes and undoubtedly discussed the matter with Synge.
40. J. W. Tenniel's political cartoons in *Punch* during the period of the Land War regularly depicted Irish peasants as sinister ape-men, with protruding fangs and retreating brows, clutching bill-hooks, against a background of barrels of dynamite. See the following cartoons in *Punch*: "The Rivals" (13 August 1881, p. 67); "Two Forces" (29 October 1881, p. 199); "The Irish Inferno" (17 December 1881, p. 283). This certainly expressed, as well as a political position, a social-Darwinist assessment of the Irish as still at a primitive stage in human evolution.
41. It is now accepted that there was a full collaboration on this play, although Yeats minimalised Lady Gregory's contribution.
42. Again, a very tender area for Nationalists. Lady Gregory includes a mild joke on this subject in her play *Spreading the News*, in *Collected Works*, I: *The Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1971). The Removable Magistrate regularly draws on his experiences in the Andaman

Islands to analyse events in a small Irish town: "There was a case in the Andaman Islands, a murderer of the Mopsa tribe, a religious enthusiast." This play, in many ways close in subject matter to *The Playboy* – it turns on a mistaken assumption of murder and adultery and is possibly based on an abandoned scenario of Synge's (*CW*, III, 187–8) – was enormously popular at the Abbey, despite its presentation of Irish country people as near-imbeciles.

43. William G. Fay and Catherine Carswell, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), p. 212. In fact the play had already been censored in rehearsal on the advice of Lady Gregory and Yeats: Yeats thought that there was too much "bad language" in the play – Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1972), p. 80.
44. As Demeter and Proserpine are, according to Frazer, one goddess, not two (see *GB1*, I, 330).
45. It is probably necessary to ask whether an analysis of the play in terms either of the morphology of folktales or of structural anthropology might not be equally appropriate. No folktale formula fits *The Playboy* as an overall structure. Douglas Hyde's version of an Irish folktale, "Guleesh Na Guss Dhu", provides the best comparison. The hero, a dirty lazy boy, belittled by his father, is driven from home and is almost immediately transformed into a hero who wins the King of France's daughter – *Beside the Fire* (London: David Nutt, 1890), pp. 104–28. The concept of the "fool of the family" being transformed into a hero and winning a bride is present in both works; but Christy's downfall and loss of his bride violates the folktale formula. An analysis deriving from structural anthropology seems initially more promising. Lévi-Strauss's conception of myth as composed of a group of binary oppositions which exist in the synchronic part of the narrative, rather than the diachronic part ("telling the story"), could be applied with some appropriateness to the first act of *The Playboy*. In "The Story of Asdiwal", *Structural Anthropology* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), pp. 146–97, Lévi-Strauss finds bundles of binary oppositions which are the "underlying logical structure" of the narrative: thus we have mother/daughter; downstream/upstream; low/high; endogamy/exogamy; matrilocal/patrilocal; mountain hunting/sea hunting; land/water. Lévi-Strauss confidently applies such a mode of analysis to "invented" myths, such as the Ring cycle, reversing roles and characters to facilitate his schema – *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 44–54. If we examine *The Playboy* in this mode, we do find a surprising number of binary oppositions in the first act: cousin marriage / marriage with a stranger; settled / wandering, homeless; a girl who rules her father / a boy who has killed his father. But in the next two acts it becomes difficult to make use of such an analysis.
46. Synge, *Letters* II, 221.
47. Patrick Pearse, "From a Hermitage", *Irish Freedom*, June 1913.
48. Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse, Triumph of Failure* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1977), p. 337.
49. "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth", *The Dial*, November 1921; repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 175–8.

IX

FRAZER, CONRAD AND THE "TRUTH OF PRIMITIVE PASSION"

Robert Hampson

I

ON 19 October 1900, H. G. Wells wrote to George Gissing describing the voyage made by his copy of the *Fortnightly Review*: "Popham that good man next door gets the *Fortnightly* from me and after that Joseph Conrad bears it off and then it goes to Hick."[1] The issues for October and November 1900 carried a two-part essay by Frazer, "The Saturnalia and Kindred Festivals", designed by him as a trailer for the forthcoming Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*.[2] In this essay, Frazer described various festivals "when the customary restraints of law and morality are thrown aside" and "the darker passions find a vent".[3] He focused particularly on one feature of such festivals: the sacrifice of a mock or temporary king to secure fertility. Early the following year, the issues for February and April carried two of Andrew Lang's four hostile reviews of the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*.[4] In these two reviews, Lang addressed himself to both the overt and covert plots of *The Golden Bough*: namely, the riddle of the priest in the grove of Nemi and "Mr. Frazer's Theory of the Crucifixion". From the *Fortnightly* alone, Conrad could have gained direct experience of Frazer's work and also gleaned some of the key ideas of *The Golden Bough*. During precisely this period, Conrad began and completed the long short-story "Falk", and "Falk" repays close examination in this context.[5]

"Falk" begins with an allusion to "the night of ages when the primeval man" (p. 145) evolved the first rudiments of cooking and story-telling. It then produces an opposition between "heroism at sea" and "the heroism of primitive times" (p. 146). This is the first of what proves to be a series of self-dissolving oppositions: the solution to this particular opposition provides the thematic frame for the narrative that follows. When the narrator begins his tale, he immediately produces a second opposition by referring to Hermann's ship, the *Diana*, as "Diana not of Ephesus

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

but of Bremen" (p. 149). This opposition between the goddess and the ship, between classical virginity and German domesticity, is resolved by its embodiment in Hermann's (unnamed) niece, who is constructed by reference to a series of such oppositions. She has "a beauty of a rustic and olympian order" (p. 152); she is "youthful and also perfectly mature, as though she had been some fortunate immortal" (p. 151). The implicit association of the niece with the goddess Diana becomes explicit later, when she is described as "a very nymph of Diana the Huntress" (p. 208). Frazer begins his account of the grove of Nemi with a brief discussion of the "sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis"[6] and the nymph Egeria. If Hermann's statuesque niece is to be equated with such figures, Falk himself bears comparison with the priest and murderer, the King of the Wood, who maintains his fearful vigil in the grove.[7] In the course of the story, Falk faces two challenges: from the narrator, whom he imagines to be his rival in love (but the expected "stag fight" – p. 156 – does not occur), and from the carpenter (in the story Falk finally tells), whom Falk kills in single combat. An anthropological patina has an obvious appropriateness to a tale which seeks to explore "the absolute truth of primitive passion" (p. 223), and that word "primitive" acquires a fuller resonance from this anthropological context. Furthermore, just as the rivalry is displaced from the inset love story to Falk's own, more deeply embedded tale of cannibalism, so, too, is the exploration of "primitive passion". Conrad explores the sexual passion of Falk through the tale of extreme hunger that Falk tells, and thereby suggests the equation of these two "hungers" at "the foundation of all the emotions" (p. 224). The end of Falk's tale also takes us back to the original opposition: "heroism at sea" as opposed to "the heroism of primitive times". This opposition is now ambiguously resolved in the suggestion that the shipboard struggle of Falk and the carpenter displayed "all the qualities of classic heroism" (p. 234). The ambiguous nature of the word "classic" is emphasised by a second summary of Falk's tale ("with its freshwater pump like a spring of death, its man with the weapon" – p. 234), where the language points back to a primitive drama like that of the "grim figure" with the "drawn sword" in the grove of Nemi.

II THE SOUL OF THINGS

On 18 January 1901 Conrad wrote to Edmund Gosse thanking him for "the names . . . and for all the additional information" which Gosse had

provided for "Falk".[8] Gosse also provides a personal link between Frazer and Conrad. Gosse had met Frazer in Trinity College in 1885, when Gosse went to Cambridge to give his Clark Lectures, and they remained in contact with each other subsequently.[9] In 1899 Gosse had been instrumental in securing a grant for Frazer from the Royal Literary Fund,[10] just as, in 1902, he was to secure a similar grant for Conrad.[11] Gosse, however, was a ubiquitous figure in English literary and intellectual life in this period, so too much weight cannot be placed on this particular link. There were, however, other personal connections between Conrad and Frazer. For example, in January 1904 Conrad and his family took up residence briefly in London, and Conrad entered into what was to become a long-lasting friendship with Sidney Colvin, who was then director of the British Museum library. Twenty years earlier, Colvin was a Fellow of Trinity College (with Frazer) and was then involved in the planning stages of Frazer's translation of Pausanius: in letters from August to October 1884, Frazer passed on to Macmillan various suggestions from Colvin about the format for the translation.[12]

Another, and perhaps more significant, personal connection between Conrad and Frazer is provided by Bronisław Malinowski. Malinowski, a protégé of Frazer's, maintained a close relationship with him from 1910 until Frazer's death. Malinowski also seems to have been in contact with Conrad from at least 1913, when he gave Conrad a complimentary copy of *The Family among Australian Aborigines.*[13] Whether Conrad read Malinowski's work is not clear, but certainly Malinowski read Conrad's. His diary, written during two periods of field-work – from September 1914 to August 1915, when he was among the Mailu, and from October 1917 to mid-July 1918, when he was among the Trobriand Islanders – bears witness to this. During the first period of field-work, he records his reading of *Romance*, "Youth" and other work by Conrad.[14] One expression of the frustrations of field-work points to his familiarity with another story from the *Youth* volume and to a significant (indeed, worrying) identification with its central character: "On the whole my feelings towards the natives are decidedly tending to 'Exterminate the Brutes'."[15] Malinowski's reading of Conrad during his first field-work trip adds significance to the statement recorded by Adam Kuper: "Malinowski once boasted that Rivers would be the Rider Haggard of anthropology, but he would be its Conrad."[16] This suggests that Conrad's relation to Frazer – and his relation to anthropology, generally – might be approached from quite another angle.

Conrad's years as a sailor had actually taken him to some of the places that figure in *The Golden Bough* and had put him in contact with some

of the "primitive" cultures to which Frazer refers – most obviously in Africa and in the Malay archipelago. In addition, Conrad had read (for pleasure and for the purposes of his fiction) the kind of works that the British anthropologists also drew upon for their studies: that is, as Gillian Beer points out, the reports of explorers, travellers, sailors and colonists.[17] In his essay "Geography and Some Explorers" Conrad cited "explorers and discoverers" as the heroes of his boyhood, and he demonstrated there the range of his knowledge and reading in this field.[18] In *An Outcast of the Islands, The Rescue, Lord Jim,* "The Planter of Malata" and *Victory*, Conrad drew upon such works as A. R. Wallace's *Malay Archipelago*, Fred McNair's *Perak and the Malays* and Rodney Mundy's *Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes*.[19] The problem this poses is demonstrated by the following passage from *Lord Jim*:

> There is a rebellious soul in things which must be overcome by powerful charms and incantations. Thus old Sura . . . a professional sorcerer . . . who attended all the rice sowings and reapings for miles around for the purpose of subduing the stubborn soul of things. (p. 266)

Frazer describes various "charms and incantations" used by "the priest or sorcerer" to secure "the soul of the rice" at rice harvests in Borneo, Java and Burma.[20] Frazer's account enriches our understanding of the passage from *Lord Jim*, but whether Conrad was drawing upon Frazer, or upon similar sources to those Frazer drew upon, cannot be decided with any certainty. In the first instance, then, we should perhaps look for affinities between Conrad's work and Frazer's rather than signs of direct influence.

III CHARMS AND TALISMANS

In his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, Conrad gave a brief account of the minimal effect Christian education had had upon Almayer's Malay wife. It had left her with only a "little brass cross", which she regarded "with superstitious awe":

> That superstitious feeling connected with some vague talismanic properties of the little bit of metal and the still more hazy but terrible notion of some bad Djinns and horrible torments invented, as she

> thought, for her especial punishment by the good Mother Superior in case of the loss of the above charm. (p. 41)

Mrs Almayer's Christian talisman receives its negative enforcement through a hazy notion of Islamic Djinn and through a perception of the Mother Superior that equates her with a wizard or magician. Her "theological" awareness is represented as operating on the level of magic and superstition.[21] In the short story "Karain", which was written early in 1897 (again with a Malay setting), Conrad takes this use of magic as a sign of "primitive" ways of thinking a step further. The central character, Karain, is haunted by the spirit of the man he has killed, until he is released by the talisman he is given by Hollis, one of the English sailors to whom he tells his tale. What is interesting is not so much Karain's release from haunting by the talisman as the ingredients from which the talisman is made. Our attention is directed towards the Jubilee sixpence, which Hollis presents to Karain as a powerful charm, but we should not fail to notice that the sixpence is sewn into a piece of leather cut from a glove and that the whole is put round Karain's neck on a length of ribbon.[22] All these items are produced from a small leather box, whose contents the narrator describes as follows:

> There were a couple of reels of cotton, a packet of needles, a bit of silk ribbon, dark blue; a cabinet photograph, at which Hollis stole a glance before laying it on the table face downwards . . . a bunch of flowers, a narrow white glove with many buttons, a slim packet of letters carefully tied up. Amulets of white men! Charms and talismans! (p. 48)

If Karain's talisman is a sign of "primitive" ways of thinking, then Hollis's mementoes represent the kind of European "survival" (here, obvious examples of contagious magic) in which Frazer was interested. And the passage as a whole conveys a Frazerian sense of the continuity between so-called "primitive" and "civilised" peoples.[23] Indeed, Frazer's observation that "our resemblances to the savage are still far more numerous than our differences from him"[24] finds an echo in Conrad's 1895 "Author's Note" to *Almayer's Folly*: "There is a bond between us and that humanity so far away . . . I am content to sympathise with common mortals, no matter where they live" (p. VIII). This sense of continuity can also, however, be presented less positively. Frazer elsewhere refers to "the permanent existence of such a solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society", which he expresses through a powerful visual image:

> We seem to move on a thin crust which may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below. From time to time a hollow murmur underground or a sudden spirt of flame into the air tells of what is going on beneath our feet.[25]

In his *Portraits from Memory*, Bertrand Russell, another Trinity man, used a very similar image to convey his impression of Conrad:

> I felt, though I do not know whether he would have accepted such an image, that he thought of civilised and morally tolerable human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths.[26]

Thus, at the end of "Karain", Conrad juxtaposes impressions of the Strand to the characters' sense of the greater reality of the inset Malay story of Karain, and what is adumbrated in "Karain" becomes a central concern in "Heart of Darkness".

Indeed, the "heart of darkness" can be read as precisely that "solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society" to which Frazer refers. Conrad's novella is more than just a piece of anti-colonial reportage: working across that aspect of the text is an interrogation of the continuity between the "primitive" and the "civilised". This is true not only in relation to Kurtz, who goes into Africa believing in the white man's civilising mission, only to experience "the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts" (p. 144). It is also true of Marlow, who frankly acknowledges his "remote kinship" with "the night of first ages" (p. 96) and is prepared to recognise that the African drums have "as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country" (p. 71). Indeed, Marlow asserts that this "layer of savagery" represents the "truth" concealed or denied by European society: "We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there – there you could look at a thing monstrous and free" (p. 96). The narrative structure also embodies this view: what seems, at the outset, an opposition between the Thames and the Congo ends as an equation. In Marlow's words, this also "has been one of the dark places of the earth" (p. 48), and the fantasy about the Roman colonisation of Britain, which these words introduce, edges the reader towards the same equation of English and African realities – and serves to destabilise the discourse of imperialism.

Two parts of Conrad's representation of that African reality also have affinities with Frazerian anthropology. First, there is the idea of animism that is drawn on in Conrad's representation of the Africans. Frazer's

mentor Edward Tylor had introduced the concept of animism into anthropology in his 1871 study *Primitive Culture*.[27] In "Heart of Darkness" the fireman on the steamer who thinks of the boiler as an "evil spirit" that needs appeasing, wears "an impromptu charm, made of rags, tied to his arm" (p. 98), and Kurtz's followers, who see the steamer as a "fierce river-demon beating the water with its terrible tail and breathing black smoke into the air" (p. 145), try to influence it with their charm or fetish – "a bunch of black feathers, a mangy skin with a pendent tail" (p. 145). More specifically Frazerian is the representation of Kurtz as a man–god. This solution to various narrative mysteries is suggested from the outset. Before he begins his tale, Marlow refers to the need for "something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to" (p. 51). What the reader takes as the motive for the quest that is Marlow's narrative is, in fact, the disenchanting end of the journey. Again, in the account of Marlow's predecessor's death, the final ironic reference to Fresleven as the "supernatural being" (p. 54) suggests simultaneously the "primitive" thinking of his killers and the key to Kurtz's role. (The brickmaker's allusion to Kurtz as "a special being" – p. 79 – falls into the same pattern.) Kurtz, indeed, is specifically represented as playing the part of the type of man–god whom Frazer called a "weather king". One of the "bizarre" fragments that Marlow overhears from the conversation between the manager and his uncle is the phrase "Make rain and fine weather" (p. 89), which also occurs in Frazer's account of "weather kings".[28] This might or might not refer to Kurtz, but, later, when Marlow has heard of the "midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites" (p. 118) – that is, the god-like role that Kurtz has taken up – Kurtz is clearly described in terms that readily associate him with the "rain-maker". The postscript to his pamphlet, for example, is compared to "a flash of lightning in a serene sky" (p. 118). This subtle association of Kurtz and weather is reinforced when we are told how "he came to them with thunder and lightning" (p. 128), and what is implied by the association is later spelt out explicitly: "Some of the pilgrims behind the stretcher carried his arms – two shot-guns, a heavy rifle, and a light revolver-carbine – the thunderbolts of that pitiful Jupiter" (p. 134). Jupiter Pluvius was, as his name suggests, a rain god.

One of Frazer's examples of the "rain-maker" is of particular interest in this context: "On a hill at Bomma (the mouth of the Congo) dwells Namvulu Vumu, King of the Rain and Storm."[29] On 12 June 1890 Conrad disembarked at Boma, which was "the seat of government" for the Congo (and is referred to by that periphrasis in "Heart of Darkness"), before he made that journey up-river which forms the basis of Marlow's

experiences. It is worth noting that, as Norman Sherry has shown, there is no ground in the facts of Conrad's own experiences for a Kurtz who presided "at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites".[30] Klein, the agent at Stanley Falls who died on Conrad's down-river journey, contributed only his death on board ship and the suggestion of his name to Kurtz. He had been the agent at the Stanley Falls station for only a few months when Conrad arrived, and the Stanley Falls station did not provide "the necessary isolation and privacy" for the kind of practices implied in "Heart of Darkness".[31] Sherry concluded that "a great deal has been added to what Conrad knew of Klein to transform him into Kurtz".[32] Najder has suggested a possible source for some aspects of Kurtz in legends about the death of Alexander the Great.[33] Alexander "demanded to be paid the homage due to a god", took part in human sacrifices, accepted last tributes on a litter. Most striking of all,

> The night before he died, he crawled out on all fours from his palace to drown himself in the Euphrates, hoping that his body would be lost and people would believe that he had disappeared like an immortal god. But his wife traced him and brought him back to die in bed.[34]

Not only does this provide a curious parallel to the circumstances preceding Kurtz's death (with Marlow in the role of Alexander's wife), but the legend is clearly cut from the same cloth as much of *The Golden Bough*, or, rather, Alexander sets out to create a myth about his own death from a self-conscious understanding of the narrative conventions of such myths. Did Frazer perhaps help Conrad to bring different elements into focus in his representation of Kurtz as a "man–god"?

Besides affinities of outlook and material, there are also certain similarities of method to be found in "Heart of Darkness" and *The Golden Bough*. For example, as Vickery points out, *The Golden Bough* is constructed as a quest.[35] Frazer sets himself two questions at the outset: "First, why had the priest to slay his predecessor? and second, why, before he slew him, had he to pluck the Golden Bough?"[36] Frazer thus announces the riddles that his narrative professes to solve, but the real object of the quest is concealed: namely, the revelation of the primitive roots of Christianity. In the same way, Marlow suggests at the start that his tale will reveal the "idea" that "redeems" imperialism (p. 51), but his revelation of "primitive" impulses and urges in human nature in the end questions the existence of any values by which to live. Frazer's announced quest takes the reader through a mass of detail, which is retrospectively decoded. As Vickery observes, there is "a dislocation of

perspective which brings us too close to the scene or overwhelms us with detail so that only when we stand back and regard the whole work does the pattern emerge".[37] This is clearly analogous to Conrad's use of the device of "delayed decoding" in "Heart of Darkness", as, for example, in his account of the African attack upon the steamer, where we are given sense impressions first, and then the interpretation of those impressions afterwards.[38] Again, Frazer's use of the "comparative method" – juxtaposing myths, legends, practices from different times and different places – can be compared to Conrad's foreshadowing, in "Heart of Darkness", of Joyce's mythic logic method.[39] Within the frame of a Buddhist teaching-tale, Conrad writes a version of his own journey into Africa palimpsestically over Aeneas's descent into the Underworld and Dante's descent into the Inferno.[40] Conrad's comparative method, however, is at the service of a different vision from Frazer's: where Frazer, despite his vacillations and his habit of entertaining alternative hypotheses, aims at a universal truth, a "Key to all Mythologies", Conrad's narrative problematises "truth". Bernstein's description of Pound's use of the mythic method in the *Cantos* is applicable to Conrad's adumbration of the method in "Heart of Darkness": "A mythic tale . . . does not pretend to an analytically exhaustive 'reading' of its constituent parts. It remains permanently over-determined, available to successive 'decodings'."[41]

Conrad's deployment of the "mythical method" in "Heart of Darkness" can thus be seen to engage with one of the issues in late-twentieth-century anthropology: the repositioning of anthropology in relation to its "objects" of study. Where Malinowski's participant-observation model produced anthropology as speaking with authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves, Conrad's narrative method both subverts its speaker and draws attention to the unspeakable. Similarly, where Malinowskian anthropology assumes the transparency of its own language, Conrad's linguistic and fictional self-consciousness in "Heart of Darkness" can be compared to the more recent awareness of the "literariness" of anthropology – anthropology as fiction, "the invention, not the representation of cultures".[42] A work such as Richard Price's *First-Time* is constructed as a series of discrete narrations, and the anthropologist's own narrative is not granted a privileged, authoritative status.[43] *First-Time*, like "Heart of Darkness", denies complete knowledge: interpretation remains provisional. Interestingly, *First-Time* begins with what Price describes as a "neo-Frazerian literary device": "In a sacred grove beside the village of Dańgogó, shaded by equatorial trees, stands a weathered shrine to the Old-Time People (*Awónêngè*), those ancestors

who 'heard the guns of war' . . ." As Price observes, "anthropologists, too, have their ancestors".[44]

IV MEN LIKE GODS

Kurtz is not the only character in Conrad's fiction who plays the part of god. In the opening chapter of *Almayer's Folly*, for example, we are told how Almayer used to listen to "the noise of a hot discussion" in Hudig's private office: "the deep and monotonous growl of the Master, and the roared-out interruptions of Lingard – two mastiffs fighting over a marrowy bone. But to Almayer's ears it sounded like a quarrel of Titans – a battle of the gods" (p. 8). Almayer clearly overvalues Hudig and Lingard, and that overvaluation (as we learn) reflects his overvaluation of himself. Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* similarly overestimates himself, and that overestimation is this time expressed directly through imagery which suggests that he sees himself as god-like. We are told, for example, with nice ambiguity, how he "descended" amongst his wife's Malay–Portuguese family, and how he "loved to breathe the coarse incense they offered before the shrine of the successful white man" (p. 4). However, it is Tom Lingard, the "King of the Sea", who most clearly tries to play a god-like role in the course of this novel. In his attempts to arrange people's lives and pass judgement on their actions, he takes upon himself the role of a god: "The doer of justice sat with compressed lips and a heavy heart, while in the calm darkness outside the silent world seemed to be waiting breathlessly for that justice he held in his hand" (p. 224). And, after he gives his judgement, a storm breaks out "like a wrathful and threatening discourse of an angry god" (p. 283). By *The Rescue*, this god-like role has become more clearly associated with some of the attributes of the rain god. Lingard's ship is called *Lightning*, and his cabin is decorated with a shield displaying "a sheaf of conventional thunderbolts" (p. 32) on a red field.

In each of these instances, the association of men with gods serves to express the character's idealised self-image. In subsequent novels, Conrad uses this association in a different way, as part of his move from exploration of the self-ideal to exploring the self in relation to society.[45] *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* establishes the paradigm, the ship as a model of society; and the association of Captain Allistoun with the classical gods demonstrates the different significance of these god-like men: "He, the ruler of that minute world, seldom descended from the Olympian heights of his poop. Below him – at his feet, so to speak –

common mortals led their busy and insignificant lives" (p. 31). As Conrad puts it in *The Shadow-Line*, these sea captains, like Frazer's sacrificial kings, constitute "a dynasty; continuous not in blood, indeed, but in its experience" (p. 53). "The End of the Tether" and "The Black Mate" particularly repay attention in this context.[46]

"The End of the Tether" is the story of a ship's master, Captain Whalley, who has spent "fifty years at sea" (p. 167). The narrative emphasises both the long temporal perspective this lengthy career implies and also Whalley's "time-defying vigour" (p. 221). The story hinges, however, on Whalley's discovery of an unexpected and disabling weakness. Whalley conceals this weakness from his partner in order to hold onto his command, but the situation is complicated by the presence on board ship of a very ambitious young mate: "Whenever he joined a ship the intention of ousting his commander out of the berth and taking his place was always present at the back of his head" (p. 239). This situation clearly resembles that described by Frazer as "the killing of the divine king"[47] – in particular, the killing of the king when his strength fails. If Conrad had not had any contact with *The Golden Bough*, we might say that Frazer's anthropological account could be extended to include such modern professional relations. But "The End of the Tether" was written in June 1902 – that is, after "Falk", the essay by Frazer and the two reviews by Lang – and there are some details in the story which suggest that Conrad might indeed have read *The Golden Bough*. Conrad stresses Whalley's patriarchal appearance; he describes how, when he first arrived on board the ship, he "seemed to have fallen on board from the sky" (p. 270); and, when he goes blind, Whalley is described as "having been cast out, like a presumptuous Titan, from heaven" (p. 305). The most significant detail, however, occurs towards the end, when Conrad suddenly forces our attention onto the ship's name: the *Sofala*. We are told that Whalley's thought "lingered on the name" (p. 327), and well it might. Robert Kimbrough, in his recent edition of the *Youth* volume, provides two glosses for the name. First, he relates it to the "5th, 4th, and 6th" notes of the diatonic scale, but he doesn't convincingly explain either the relevance of this information to the tale or the significance of the permutated order. Secondly, he describes it as the name of a trade district in south-central Mozambique.[48] That this is the more likely referent is suggested by a passage in *The Golden Bough*. In the section "The Killing of the Divine King", Frazer refers to Sofala and the custom there of "putting kings to death as soon as they suffered from any personal defect": "These kings of Sofala were regarded as gods by their people . . . Nevertheless a slight bodily blemish . . . was considered a

sufficient cause for putting one of these god-men to death."[49]

That Conrad might have been familiar with this passage is further supported by a similar custom among the neighbouring Zulus which Frazer describes on the same page: "It appears to have been a Zulu custom to put the king to death as soon as he began to have wrinkles or grey hairs."[50] Frazer then tells the story of "the notorious Zulu tyrant Chaka", who "had become greatly apprehensive of the approach of grey hairs."[51] until he heard from Europeans of "that absurd nostrum, the hair oil". The Victorian equivalent of Grecian 2000 saved him from the Zulu equivalent of "early retirement". Conrad wrote a rather slight short story, "The Black Mate", in which the central character, the mate of the *Sapphire*, has earned his nickname from his striking head of intensely black hair. Early in the story, one of the ship-masters expresses the view that "the sea was no place for elderly men": "Only young men and men in their prime were equal to modern conditions of push and hurry. Look at the great firms: almost every single one of them was getting rid of men showing any signs of age" (p. 88). In this context, it comes as no great surprise that the Black Mate's intensely black hair (like that of the Zulu king, Chaka) came out of a bottle.

V THE SCAPEGOAT

In the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*, Frazer outlined a tripartite scheme of human development: an Age of Magic giving way to an Age of Religion, which, in turn, is replaced by an Age of Science. In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad presents a society which has apparently entered the Age of Science, but, instead of following Frazer's positivist, evolutionary model, Conrad depicts an Age of Science that has not escaped from magical and religious ways of thought. For Mr Vladimir, science is the "sacrosanct fetish of to-day" (p. 31), while Ossipon's attachment to Lombroso is represented as akin to religious belief. He invokes Lombroso "as an Italian peasant recommends himself to his favourite saint":

> If Comrade Ossipon did not recommend his terrified soul to Lombroso, it was only because on scientific grounds he could not believe that he carried about him such a thing as a soul. But he had in him the scientific spirit, which moved him to testify . . . (p. 297)

As for the Professor, "The science of colleges had replaced thoroughly the faith of conventicles" (p. 80). But, as with Ossipon, this has been a

process of translation rather than supersession: his rooms in Islington are described as "the hermitage of the perfect anarchist" (p. 82). In the same way, Michaelis's materialism is described as "a faith revealed in visions" (p. 44); his monologues are a "confession of his faith" (p. 45); and he is described as having "the temperament of a saint" (p. 109). And there are other replacement religions: the drawing-room of the "lady patroness of Michaelis" (p. 104) is the "temple of an old woman's not ignoble curiosity" (p. 105); the "mysterious houses" of Brett Street are "temples of petty commerce" (p. 150); while the hippophile Inspector Heat puts his "faith in the sporting prophets" (p. 206) of the Pink 'Un. In this imagistic context, various references to "sacrifice" (pp. 161, 162, 176) acquire a certain resonance which affects the reader's response to Stevie's death.[52]

Claire Rosenfield has specifically related Stevie's death to the vegetation myths of *The Golden Bough*:

> Traditionally, the death of the hero, preliminary to his bodily or spiritual rebirth and the regeneration of the community, may take the form of tearing to pieces. The fertility rites of vegetation myths provide ample evidence for this motif. Dionysus, Osiris, Orpheus, Attis – all are listed by Sir James Frazer in his discussions of primitive rites involving mutilation or disintegration.[53]

Rosenfield draws particular attention to the details of Winnie Verloc's imaginative reconstruction of the moment of Stevie's death: "After a rainlike fall of mangled limbs the decapitated head of Stevie lingered suspended alone, and fading out slowly like the last star of a pyrotechnic display" (p. 260). If Stevie is a sparagmatic hero, this is nevertheless a sacrifice which does not regenerate the community; this "rainlike fall of limbs" does not presage fertility. Where Kurtz is a dark forerunner of Bellow's "Henderson the Rain King", Stevie anticipates Nathanael West's Lemuel Pitkin and "Miss Lonelyhearts".

In his penultimate novel, *The Rover*, Conrad makes more positive use of similar material. *The Rover* begins with the return of Peyrol to his native region after an absence of forty years at sea. Peyrol's sense of estrangement ("a stranger to his native country" – p. 2) serves to introduce a vision of France – specifically, of the Giens peninsula – as "primitive" and "exotic". For example, when Peyrol first examines the boat he subsequently buys, he finds himself become "a wonder to the natives, as it had happened to him before on more than one island in distant seas" (p. 84). Similarly, when he is told about the Revolution, he listens "as if

to the tale of an intelligent islander on the other side of the world talking of bloody rites and amazing hopes of some religion unknown to the rest of mankind" (p. 94).

By means of Peyrol's alienation from his homeland, Conrad produces that equation of the "primitive" and the "civilised", and this provides an appropriate context for a narrative which is constructed by reference to the figure of the "scapegoat".[54] As the narrative proceeds, we gradually learn that the mental derangement of the central female character, Arlette, is a result of her experiences during the course of the Revolution. Her aunt tells Lieutenant Réal, who has fallen in love with Arlette, "there is death in the folds of her skirt and blood about her feet. She is for no man" – to which Réal replies, "If she had all the madness of the world and the sins of all murders of the Revolution on her shoulders, I would still hug her to my breast" (p. 225).

The figure implicit in this speech becomes explicit in the following chapter, where Arlette is described as being, for her aunt, "like the scapegoat charged with all the murders and blasphemies of the Revolution" (p. 232). This is the role in which Arlette is cast both by the local priest and by her aunt, the "peasant-priestess" (p. 228), and from which she is rescued by Peyrol.[55] Not only does Peyrol begin the process of curing her derangement, but he also, finally, takes upon himself the role of scapegoat. Frazer describes the series of substitutions that are involved in certain scapegoating rituals. He ends his account of the Jalno in Lhasa, for example, as follows:

> In the Jalno we may without undue straining discern a successor of those temporary kings, those mortal gods, who purchase a short lease of power and glory at the price of their lives. That he is the temporary substitute of the Grand Lama is certain; that he is, or was once, liable to act as scapegoat for the people is made nearly certain by his offer to change places with the real scapegoat – the King of the Years. ... Hence in the jack-pudding who now masquerades ... in the marketplace of Lhasa ... we may fairly see the substitute of a substitute, the vicar of a vicar.[56]

A similar series of substitutions takes place in *The Rover*: while Arlette is described as the scapegoat, it is that other victim of the Revolution, Lieutenant Réal, who seems destined to sacrifice himself for the benefit of France. But, at the last minute, Peyrol takes his place: the old man sacrifices himself in order to regenerate the community through the marriage of the young people.[57]

Here the narrative touches on another aspect of scapegoat rituals described by Frazer. Peyrol not only sacrifices himself, but he takes with him Scevola, the Jacobin, who represents both the values of the Revolution and, in plot terms, an obstacle to the marriage of Arlette and Réal. More important, he takes Scevola away in his boat. During the course of the narrative, great emphasis has been placed on this boat and, in particular, on its locked cabin. To begin with, this locked cabin was where various Royalists had been killed, and Peyrol's first task, after purchasing the boat, was to clean away the bloodstains. Finally, this locked cabin is where Peyrol keeps Scevola until the morning of the trip out to sea. Through both these uses, the boat is clearly associated with "all the murders and blasphemies", the blood-guilt of the Revolutionary period. In his discussion of scapegoats, Frazer draws attention to rituals in which some vehicle was used to carry away demons or diseases: "The vehicle which conveys away the demons may be of various kinds. A common one is a little ship or boat."[58] Frazer gives instances from Ceram and other "East Indian islands": "Thus in Timor Laut, to mislead the demons who are causing sickness, a small prao, containing the image of a man and provisioned for a long voyage, is allowed to drift away with wind and tide.[59] In *The Rover*, Peyrol takes his boat out to sea as part of an elaborate deception aimed at the opposing English naval forces. With his penultimate novel, then, we have again a work by Conrad which seems deeply and significantly informed by material from *The Golden Bough*.

NOTES

References to Conrad's works are to the Uniform Edition (London: J. M. Dent, 1923–8) and, where convenient, are given in the text. The collections and volumes in which the short stories cited will be found are as follows: "Karain: A Memory", *Tales of Unrest* (*Almayer's Folly and Tales of Unrest*); "Falk", *Typhoon* (*The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Typhoon*); "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether", *Youth: A Narative, and Two Other Stories*; "The Black Mate", *Tales of Hearsay* (*Tales of Hearsay and Last Essays*).

1. *George Gissing and H. G. Wells: Their Friendship and Correspondence*, ed. Royal A. Gettmann (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), p. 146.
2. J. G. Frazer, "The Saturnalia and Kindred Festivals", *Fortnightly Review*, 68 (1900), 653–76 and 825–49. For other evidence of familiarity with Frazer's work among Conrad's circle, see W. H. Hudson's letter to the Ranee of Sarawak (5 January 1914): "It is the new *Athenaeum* – the first number at 6d and also contains a good review of Frazer's *Balder the Beautiful*. I had

Roberts (Morley) here to see me last Wednesday and he told me he had just finished reading Balder – also that he had read *all* the previous vols three times over!" – *Landscapes and Literati: Unpublished Letters of W. H. Hudson and George Gissing*, ed. Dennis Shrubsall and Pierre Coustillas (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1985), pp. 99–100.

3. *Fortnightly Review*, October 1900, p. 653.
4. Andrew Lang, "The Golden Bough" and "Mr. Frazer's Theory of the Crucifixion", *Fortnightly Review*, 69 (1901), 235–48 and 650–62. Lang continued the attack in *Magic and Religion* (1901), into which these two articles were incorporated.
5. Conrad began work on "Falk" in January 1901, and it was completed by 23 May 1901. For dates of composition, I am indebted to Rosalind Walls Smith, "Dates of Composition of Conrad's Works", *Conradiana*, 11, no. 1 (1979), 68.
6. *GB 1*, I, 2.
7. Notice that Falk is described as having "an anchorite's bony head fitted with a Capuchin's beard and adjusted to a herculean body" (p. 201).
8. *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, II, ed. F. R. Karl and L. Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 319–20. Gosse had supplied Conrad with Scandinavian names.
9. Ackerman, p. 148.
10. Ibid., p. 223.
11. Anne Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 452.
12. Ackerman, p. 56.
13. Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 483, 605. Malinowski came from a similar class background (the Polish *szlachta*) and both had spent some of their childhood in Cracow.
14. Bronisław Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967): "I finished *Vanity Fair*, and read the whole of *Romance*. I couldn't tear myself away; it was as though I had been drugged" (p. 16); "we talked about Conrad; I took *Youth* . . ." (p. 46); "hardly had the strength of will to finish the Conrad stories" (pp. 53–4); "Evelyn Innes left a strong impression on me – Conrad's novel an incomparably stronger one" (p. 99). The reference to "Conrad stories" presumably points to the *Youth* volume (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1902), which contained "Youth", "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether".
15. Malinowski, *Diary*, p. 69.
16. Adam Kuper, *Anthropologists and Anthropology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 9. Raymond Firth, in *Man and Culture: An Evaluation of the Work of Bronisław Malinowski* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), names B. Z. Seligman as the addressee of this remark. Malinowski records reading both Rivers and Rider Haggard in the first entries in his *Diary*: "That afternoon I read Rivers. . . . Oh yes, that was the time I made the mistake of reading a Rider Haggard novel" (pp. 6–7). *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) begins by locating itself in relation to enthnography: Allan Quatermain, in his "Introduction", presents himself as a field anthropologist as he lists various topics he would have liked to have included in his narrative – differences

"between the Zulu and Kukuana dialects", "the indigenous flora and fauna of Kukuanaland", "the magnificent system of military organization", and "the domestic and family customs of the Kukuanas". In *Allan Quatermain* (1887), a whole chapter is given over to a detailed ethnography of the Zu-Vendi. Brian Street observes, "Such a detailed analysis of the institutions by which a 'primitive' society is ordered is rare in the anthropological fiction of the day, and Haggard deserves more credit than he is usually accorded for setting this example" – *The Savage in Literature: Representations of "Primitive" Society in English Fiction 1858–1920* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 139. Haggard was, no doubt, influenced by his long friendship with Andrew Lang. James Clifford, in his essay "On Ethnographic Self-Fashioning: Conrad and Malinowski", in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 92–113, concludes that "Anthropology is still waiting for its Conrad" (p. 96). Clifford argues that "the author of *Argonauts* devotes himself to constructing realistic cultural fictions, whereas Conrad ... represents the activity as a contextually limited practice of storytelling" (p. 100), and that it is Conrad, rather than Malinowski, who sees more deeply into the predicament of the dissolution of a subjectivity grounded in culture and language. As a result, Conrad's "life of writing, of constantly becoming an English writer, offers a paradigm for ethnographic subjectivity; it enacts a structure of feeling continuously involved in translation among languages, a consciousness deeply aware of the arbitrariness of conventions, a new secular relativism" (p. 96). Conrad, in this way, anticipates contemporary self-reflexive or dialogic anthropology. I am grateful to Deirdre Toomey for drawing my attention to the statement recorded by Kuper, and to Peter Caracciolo for alerting me to James Clifford's stimulating essay on Conrad and Malinowski.

17. See above, p. 44.
18. Joseph Conrad, "Geography and Some Explorers", *Last Essays* (London: J. M. Dent, 1926), pp. 1–31.
19. Richard Curle, *The Last Twelve Years of Joseph Conrad* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), p. 109; Florence Clemens, "Conrad's Favorite Bedside Book", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXXVIII (1939), 305–15; Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Eastern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 139–70. See also the notes to the Penguin editions of *Lord Jim* (Harmondsworth, 1986) and *Victory* (Harmondsworth, 1989).
20. *GB 1*, I, 353–5. *Lord Jim* was begun in May 1898 and was first published (in serial form) in *Blackwood's Magazine* from October 1899 until November 1900. In the Second Edition of *The Golden Bough*, Frazer gave a fuller treatment of "The Rice-Mother in the East Indies".
21. Almayer's "theology" is similarly "primitive". Towards the end of *An Outcast of the Islands*, Almayer is shown, standing over his daughter in her cot, looking "at that part of himself, at that small and unconscious particle of humanity that seemed to him to contain all his soul" (p. 320). For Frazer's account of "external souls", see *GB 1*, II, 296–326.
22. For a discussion of this passage from a different angle, see my essay "The Genie out of the Bottle: Conrad, Wells and Joyce", in Peter L. Caracciolo (ed.), *"The Arabian Nights" in English Literature* (London: Macmillan,

1988), p. 222.

23. As John Lester points out, the Malays of "Karain" have their counterpart in the superstitious Breton peasants of "The Idiots": "indeed, the unfortunate Susan dies because she fears that the husband she has killed has come back to haunt her" – *Conrad and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 58. Frazer writes of corn-mothers in Upper Brittany (*GB 1*, I, 335), Breton midsummer fires (*GB 1*, II, 261) and Breton peasants "fighting the wind" (*GB 1*,I,30).
24. *GB 1*,I,211.
25. *GB A*, p. 56.
26. Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), p. 82. Conrad made a three-day visit to Russell at Trinity College in September 1913. See Owen Knowles, "Conrad and Bertrand Russell: New Light on their Relationship", *The Conradian*, 13, no. 2 (December 1988), 192–202. Such imagery is quite common in this period: in chapter 5 of *Deliverance* (1884), Mark Rutherford reflects, "Our civilization seemed nothing but a thin film or crust lying over a volcanic pit, and I often wondered whether the pit would not break up through it and destroy us all".
27. Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* (London, 1871).
28. Frazer observes that "Weather kings are common in Africa" (*GB 1*, I, 44). Among other examples, he cites the people of Quiteva in Eastern Africa: "Hence these unfortunate beings, under the persuasion that their king is a deity, exhaust their utmost means and ruin themselves in gifts to obtain with more facility what they need. Thus, prostrate at his feet, they implore of him, when the weather long continues dry, to intercede with heaven that they may have rain; and when too much rain has fallen, that they may have fair weather" (*GB 1*, I, 45–6). The Banjars of West Africa are also cited as ascribing to their king "the power of causing rain or fine weather" (*GB 1*, I, 47).
29. *GB 1*,I,52.
30. Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Western World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 70–1.
31. Ibid., p. 72.
32. Ibid., p. 78.
33. *Congo Diary and Other Uncollected Pieces by Joseph Conrad*, ed. Zdzisław Najder (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 6.
34. Ibid.
35. Vickery, pp. 128, 130–6.
36. *GB 1*,I,6.
37. Vickery, p. 131.
38. Cedric Watts, *Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": A Critical and Contextual Discussion* (Milan: Mursia International, 1977), pp. 70–1; Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980), pp. 175–9.
39. In his essay "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth", in *The Dial*, November 1923, T. S. Eliot specifically related Joyce's "mythical method" to *The Golden Bough*. See below, pp. 193–4. Vickery discusses *The Golden Bough*'s "non-chronological method of narration" (p. 119) in relation to modernism and notes how "narrative method" is replaced by "a multiple series of cross-references and

allusions" (p. 125).

40. See Peter Caracciolo, "Buddhist Teaching Stories and their Influence on Conrad, Wells, and Kipling", *The Conradian*, 11, no. 1 (May 1986), 24–34, and its extensive list of previous works on Conrad and Buddhism; Lillian Feder, "Marlow's Descent into Hell", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 9 (March 1955), 280–92, for connections with the *Aeneid*; Robert O. Evans, "Conrad's Underworld", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 2 (May 1956), for connections with Dante.
41. Michael André Bernstein, *The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 98.
42. See Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980); and James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1986). Arguably, the "scandal" caused by the publication of Malinowski's *Diary* resulted from the fact that it revealed the complexity of the ethnographic experience and suggested that his earlier accounts of his field-work were partial constructions.
43. Richard Price, *First-Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983). Price engages with the problems of writing about a culture in which knowledge is "unspeakable": "Damned if they do (tell, sing), because of terrible perceived dangers, and damned if they don't, because the knowledge would be forever lost, Saramakas steer an unsteady middle course, reluctantly sharing partial disclosures with selected kinsmen" (p. 22).
44. Ibid., pp. 5, 27.
45. For this progression, see Paul Kirschner, *Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968).
46. "The End of the Tether" was begun in March 1902 and finished on 16 October 1902. "The Black Mate" is more difficult to date, but see Keith Carabine, " 'The Black Mate': June–July 1886; January 1908", *The Conradian*, 13, no. 2 (December 1988), 128–48. Carabine argues that a short version of the story was written in June–July 1886 and an expanded version in January 1908.
47. *GB1*, I, 213–25.
48. *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 343. G. J. Resink has suggested that the order of the notes relates to *gamelan* music. I am grateful to Hans van Marle for also drawing my attention to two other Sofalas: (1) a village in eastern Bechuanaland (now Botswana); (2) a town in New South Wales (Captain Whalley's daughter lived in Australia, but in Melbourne). I am indebted to Hans van Marle for his generous advice throughout this essay.
49. *GB1*, I, 220.
50. *GB1*, I, 219.
51. Ibid.
52. These references also establish a pattern of sacrifice and substitution: first Winnie, then her mother, sacrifices herself for Stevie, but their sacrifices bring about Stevie's death when, in a further substitution, he dies in Verloc's place.
53. Claire Rosenfield, *Paradise of Snakes: An Archetypal Analysis of Conrad's*

Political Novels (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 106.

54. By the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* a whole volume was devoted to the scapegoat: *The Scapegoat* (1913).
55. Other "primitive" images are used in relation to Arlette's aunt: she is described as "a chieftainess of a tribe" (p. 169); "an old sybil risen from the tripod" (p. 170); "an old prophetess of some desert tribe" (p. 174).
56. *GB A*, pp. 573–4.
57. Thus chapter 15 ends with Réal's thought that "she, whose little feet had run ankle-deep through the terrors of death, had brought to him the sense of triumphant life" (p. 260).
58. *GB 1*, II, 185. In *The Shadow-Line*, Conrad seems to have already drawn on the "disease-ship" for part of the supernatural aura surrounding the narrator's first command. The ship not only labours under the spell of its previous captain, but also carries a burden of sickness among its crew (which the narrator describes as "the fever-devil who has got on board this ship" – p. 103). For the narrator the experience involves a confrontation with "my sense of unworthiness" (p. 108), "the sense of guilt" (p. 121), as if "all my sins had found me out" (p. 106).
59. *GB 1*,II, 186, where, however, "prao" is a misprint for "proa", a small Malay boat.

X

"WHAT ARE THE ROOTS THAT CLUTCH?": ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND* AND FRAZER'S *THE GOLDEN BOUGH*

Lionel Kelly

I

In his notes to *The Waste Land* Eliot suggests the relationship between his own text and others; and I suspect that the note about *The Golden Bough* is where recent generations of Frazer's readers have started from:

> To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean *The Golden Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognise in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.[1]

We should note here that the acknowledgement of Frazer is "general" rather than specific, and that, even when Eliot specifies the particular volumes he has called on, his acknowledgement is loftily imprecise – "certain references to vegetation ceremonies".

Much of the long tradition of commentary on *The Waste Land* has been concerned to explicate Eliot's use of Frazer and his other sources, culminating for my purposes in John B. Vickery's *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"* (1973). Following on Herbert Howarth's recovery of Eliot's intellectual history in Harvard and Europe in the second decade of this century, Vickery dates Eliot's interest in Frazer from late 1911–12, and specifies that with the publication of "Mr Apollinax" "there appears somewhat clearer evidence of Eliot's interest in combining the anthropological and classical worlds as Frazer had already done". Vickery sees the material and ideas of *The Golden Bough* used to predominantly ironic and satiric effects in the majority of Eliot's early poems. However, with *The Waste Land* these anthropological details and methods are used "less for overt satire than for exploration of the human soul"; and, if the

use of Frazer is most evident in *The Waste Land*, "there is a discernible connection between his later work and Frazer's anthropological studies". This connection Vickery seeks to establish right through to *The Elder Statesman*. In his comments on *The Waste Land* Vickery provides an overall schema for the poem and then patiently traces every explicit or buried reference to Frazer, explaining its status within a total reading of the poem which seeks to satisfy or fulfil the structural schema he sets out from.

For Vickery *The Waste Land* is about its protagonist's quest for the recovery of religious consciousness, a reading of it close to the conventions of Eliot commentary since the 1920s, which may be said to begin with Edmund Wilson's review in *The Dial*, later worked into his *Axel's Castle*:

> For this new poem . . . not only recapitulates all his earlier and already familiar motifs, but it sounds for the first time in all their intensity, untempered by irony or disguise, the hunger for beauty and the anguish at living which lie at the bottom of all his work

and

> Now Mr. Eliot uses the Waste Land as the concrete image of a spiritual drouth. His poem takes place half in the real world – the world of contemporary London, and half in a haunted wilderness – the Waste Land of the mediaeval legend; but the Waste Land is only the hero's arid soul and the intolerable world about him. The water which he longs for in the twilit desert is to quench the thirst which torments him in the London dusk. And he exists not only upon these two planes, but as if throughout the whole of human history.[3]

From Wilson's entirely reasonable summary later conventional readings have followed: increasingly, the presentation of contemporary London in the poem becomes not merely the location of the hero's present anguish, but the cause of it; and contemporary London becomes the focus of what is read as the poem's critique of modern civilisation. Eliot contributes to this view in his "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth" review of 1923 when he writes thus of "the mythical method":

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing

> his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious. It is a method for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art, toward that order and form which Mr. Aldington so earnestly desires. And only those who have won their own discipline in secret and without aid, in a world which offers very little assistance to that end, can be of any use in furthering this advance.[4]

II

Eliot's suggestion allows us to read a central passage as what he elsewhere calls, dismissively, an "important bit of social criticism". In "The Fire Sermon" we have the incident of the bored typist and the carbuncular young man: here Tiresias, as witness of these events, unites the ancient world and the contemporary – Tiresias, a figure from myth whose "history" includes sexual experience as both man and woman, a duality which has its origins in ancient magic or the supernatural. His origins associate him with a world of vegetation ceremonies which Frazer describes in "The Influence of the Sexes on Vegetation",[5] where he tells of the "crude notion that the relation of the human sexes to each other can be so used as to quicken the growth of plants": this is the form of what Frazer calls "the homoeopathic or imitative magic" found in a wide range of primitive cultures on what is virtually a global scenario – the belief that the act of human copulation (or, conversely, in some cultures, deliberate abstinence from it) will ensure a fecund crop, or will of itself instigate the generative process of nature. In "The Fire Sermon" we may see the typist's "small house agent's clerk" as wasting his seed in a casual sexual encounter, and that, by analogy, this sadly copulating couple are mimetic of the sterile contemporary world they inhabit. In the description of the event, his haste and her indifference parodically reflect the mythic association Frazer maps for us in his equation of human sexual potency with the potency of earth itself. And we may see the record which the

bored typist puts upon the gramophone when her lover has departed as an icon of mechanical iterative circularity, deliberately unlike the fecund circularity of nature which, in Frazer, human sexual intercourse is said both to imitate and to instigate. These two casual lovers take on a paradigmatic or exemplary status, and their condition becomes an index of the futility of the contemporary.

Such an account of this incident would fit with the conventions of reading the poem I have outlined, to which Vickery contributes, and which are dependent upon an acceptance of the mythic dimensions of the poem which Frazer and Jessie Weston's work provides. The difficulty is obvious: to pursue the Frazer references for elucidation of the poem's associative significance weds us to an explicatory analysis which has come to seem sterile, a mode of which Vickery's study exemplifies the virtues and the limitations.

While *The Golden Bough* is one of the sources that records the myths Eliot uses in his poem, and therefore sanctions a key group of images in it, the relationship is not simply one of influence. Frazer is clearly used as an "authority", a writer who has brought to realisation a view of human history from its primitive origins to the late nineteenth century. In particular Frazer's work on vegetation cermonies, fertility rituals and the cycles of rule, death and resurrection of the gods of the ancient world provides a record of what Vickery calls "oblique intimations of a power other than human". And in Vickery's terms *The Waste Land* is about its protagonist's search to achieve a knowledge of that power, to enter into a true religious consciousness.

The present status of Frazer as an anthropologist is described elsewhere in this collection, but it is pertinent to ask what kind of anthropology he practised. In the histories of anthropology Frazer is placed with the "classical evolutionists" such as Morgan, Tylor, Spencer and others,

> who – under the influence of the idea of "progress" – attempted a universal ordering of ethnographic data in terms of *time*. They assumed that cultural developments everywhere followed definite laws – unfolding uniformly from the simple to the complex and culminating in the institutions of western Europe. Individual cultures were of interest mainly insofar as they illustrated points along the path of cultural progress; once this path was fully laid out the history of culture would be complete.[6]

This "time"-based study of ethnographic data, which Fred Eggan calls the first "great historical synthesis" in the last half of the nineteenth

century, was opposed by "space"-based studies, the study of geographical and spatial distribution of cultural elements, which emphasized the importance of the natural environment in cultural development and the "role of diffusion and migration in bringing about cultural similarities".

If we see Frazer as operating within the assumptions of the "classical evolutionists" committed to an idea of progress, we must acknowledge that at least part of his programme goes against the grain of Eliot's convictions: *The Waste Land* does not subscribe to the idea of human progress; indeed, its dependence on the juxtaposition of the mythic past with the contemporaneous present nullifies the concept of progress in linear terms. There is a related issue of equal importance. Robert Ackerman describes Frazer as a post-Darwinian rationalist who "used ethnographic facts to try and knock the last nail in the coffin of religion in the name of objective science". Ackerman argues that by the 1880s Frazer had long been agnostic and had learnt to see the universe as a mechanism, and that his endeavour to read in the history of primitive religions was undertaken in the spirit of rationalist rather than religious inquiry. How, then, are we to see Eliot's use of *The Golden Bough* as a source book for a poem which has as its occasion, according to Vickery, a protagonist's search for religious consciousness? Vickery provides an answer, and one which suggests Eliot's creative misreading of Frazer:

> Eliot, however, undeniably saw the religious significance of Frazer's work in a different light from that of its nineteenth-century rationalist author. Frazer saw himself as slowly drawing into place siege guns (the image of his own) to be directed against the forces of hidebound tradition and superstitious religions. Eliot himself, however, saw *The Golden Bough* as a work "throwing its light on the obscurities of the soul", while of its author he declared: "He has extended the consciousness of the human mind into as dark and backward an abysm of time as has yet been explored."[7]

The argument is that, far from being destroyed, Christianity gained by being linked with Adonis and the other dying gods: for Eliot, according to Vickery, "Christianity is found to consist in the revelation of its having a longer and wider tradition than heretofore known, one as old as man himself."

Though with the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922 we are still some years from Eliot's public acknowledgement of his Anglo-Catholicism in religion, we are none the less confronted by two issues: at least two major aspects of Frazer's enterprise, his commitment to an idea of

progress, and his religious scepticism, seem set against the drive of Eliot's convictions in the period when he was making the poem. Yet *The Golden Bough* is used by Eliot as a kind of imaginative, if not scientific, authority, or, to put it another way, an authoritative account of myth if not of history, though there must be some subscription to *The Golden Bough*'s historical authenticity. Considered as a work of imaginative authority, particularly in its capacity, as Eliot put it, to throw "light on the obscurities of the soul" – a comment which might well have mystified Frazer if he read it – the status of *The Golden Bough* is like that of the other textual "authorities" Eliot cites for his poem in the notes, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (a work itself suggested by the larger programme of *The Golden Bough*), Ezekiel, Ecclesiastes, Dante, Shakespeare, Ovid, Spenser, Marvell, St Augustine, Buddha, the Pervigilium Veneris, and so on.

And here I want to pause on two other notes to *The Waste Land*. The first is to l. 218 of "The Fire Sermon", where, after determining the status of Tiresias in the poem, Eliot refers to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on Tiresias, and comments that the "whole passage from Ovid is of great anthropological interest": no attempt is made to see Ovid's endeavour as culturally determined, even if, as we may know, Ovid's relationship to his time was to see it as one of cultural impoverishment and moral depravity. In this Eliot's practice is like Frazer's use of his sources, to make no allowance for the determining perspective of the authority he cites. It is precisely unlike Pound's sense of a contiguity of perspective on the contemporary which he shares with Propertius and that animates his "Homage to Sextus Propertius".

The other note I refer to is to l. 199 of "The Fire Sermon", "O the moon shone bright on Mrs Porter", which reads with deliberate mischievousness: "I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken: it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia." This is surely a spoof note, a moment of false evidence: nothing is more remote from the poem's social elitism than this suggestion of its author's having a correspondence with Sydney, Australia. I don't imply any derogation of Australian culture in this, but merely suggest that in 1922, from an English metropolitan scene, Sydney, Australia, would be seen as a place of cultural provincialism. Nor does it affect the issue that several versions of "Mrs Porter" were current in World War I, nor that it was, apparently, familiar doggerel in Australia.

If Eliot's note to l. 199 is something of a spoof, which it is absurd to take too seriously, two comments follow: one is that Eliot, like his cultural ancestor Edgar Allan Poe, was fond of enigma as enigma, and the setting

of false trials of evidence, as in the practice of the detective story, a genre to which Eliot was devoted. With the exception of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, all the fiction he reviewed for *The Criterion* was detective fiction. The other comment follows necessarily; and that is, if one of the notes is inauthentic, then it calls the whole enterprise of the notes into question.

And here we are confronted with the persistent mystery of their existence, how they came into being, and what status they were intended to have – matters on which Eliot, and his commentators, have always been at best equivocal. Of course, many of Eliot's notes are pointed in reference: to Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, to Spenser's *Prothalamion*, to *The Tempest* and to Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. The general implication of the notes is that all these other "authorities", as I have called them, must be investigated for a true reading of the poem, but at best they are secondary to the poem itself, and, despite the labours of explication, they rarely add to our feel for the quick life of the verse and its expressive power. In effect, Eliot constructs in the notes a *posture* of authority at one remove from the text.

If the notes are ancillary to the poem (and this naturally includes the note about Frazer), the evidence of Valerie Eliot's edition of the original drafts of the poem brings us to the work done on the poem by Pound, where we have a different kind of intervention, one which yields many bonuses, but also a specific minus, and that is the loss of Conrad from its opening. In the original draft the epigraph was to have come from "Heart of Darkness", where Marlowe asks of Kurtz at the moment of his death,

> Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision, – he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath –
> "The horror! The horror!"

Pound thought Conrad not weighty enough to stand this citation (I suspect Pound hadn't read him: his professed admiration for fiction was limited to Flaubert, James and Joyce), and Eliot eventually substituted the epigraph of the Cumaean Sibyl from Petronius's *Satyricon*. Yet Conrad, who himself owed something to Frazer (see above, essay IX), seems to be very relevant to Eliot's poem. The Kurtz passage is nicely ambivalent – Eliot rather coyly calls it "somewhat elucidative". We cannot be sure whether Kurtz's cry of horror follows his realisation of the depths

of his moral depravity in the primitive world of the Congo jungle, or gives his view of his own death as a necessary expiation. The atmosphere of cult mysteries attends the presentation of Kurtz, through whom the yoking of contemporary European mores and totemistic primitive rituals is made concrete. Eliot should have trusted his initial judgement here, though, on a speculative note, I am puzzled that he didn't feel *The Secret Agent* to be equally relevant to his concerns. *The Secret Agent* (Conrad's most Dickensian novel) gives explicitly what Eliot's poem is held to give implicitly, an image of London as a location of moral squalor throughout every sector of the social matrix, cluttered with the detritus of human waste and the debris of human futility; the novel ends with a London barely emerged from the swamp of primeval chaos. Robert Hampson (see above, pp. 172–91) has already argued that in *The Secret Agent* we have a society which, though avowedly scientific, is still held in thrall to magic. He has also connected Stevie's death with vegetation myths. The indictment of contemporary London in *The Waste Land* seems to me more arbitrary and factitious than is commonly assumed, and it is surprising that, although Eliot felt Conrad to be temperamentally in sympathy with him in the making of the poem, he nowhere alludes to the text which most specifically gives credibility to that sympathy.

If Pound is partly responsible for the loss of Conrad, his contributions to the final shape of the poem are beneficial in other regards. Consider this for a moment: in Eliot's draft version of "A Game of Chess", at what eventually becomes l. 139, we read,

> When Lil's husband was coming back out of the Transport Corps I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself . . . .

For the second half of that first line Pound substitutes the idiomatic word "demobbed", a striking usage for its time. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "demobilisation" was coined in 1866, and, according to Partridge, though "demob" is associated with 1918, its common form as Service slang dates from 1945. At any rate "demobbed" was a brilliant substitution by Pound, fittingly "demotic" for this passage, energising what was otherwise an overlong and flaccid line (with its hint, incidentally, that as a member of the Transport Corps Albert would be a non-combatant).

I raise this because it is only in the third section of "A Game of Chess" that there is any specific reference to the First World War in the poem, and this is a matter of some interest since it may be said that it was precisely the war that brought about "the immense panorama of futility

and anarchy which is contemporary history", the statement which is Eliot's justification for his use of the "mythical method". Yet the sense of the war is curiously absent from or unspecified in the poem, except in the passage about Albert. And the other curious feature of this section is this: Albert is *expected* back, full of sexual needs; and there he is, a few lines later, eating hot gammon at Sunday dinner. The most common motif of First World War writing is not returning warriors, but death and loss, the waste of lives on a scale unparalleled in living memory; but in Eliot's poem the death and waste are at home, associated with Lil and her abortion. So we cannot take Albert as the agent through whom Eliot introduces into the poem the sense of public crisis commonly associated with the war; rather, he is an agent of sexual crisis, of private anxieties.

Indeed, in Eliot's recently published letters, his comments on the war make interesting reading. In part the war is written about as something disagreeable, which he hopes will soon go away: "Life here simply consists in waiting for the war to stop – if one thought of that too much it would have the same effect as Chancery on Richard Carstone in *Bleak House*. What is the use of plans? one thinks often."[8] A few weeks later, writing to his mother, and quite possibly anxious to allay her fears about his possible involvement in the war, he mentions several friends now on active service and comments, "I don't envy them. I certainly do not feel in a position to go until 'called out', though Vivien has been rather troubled – I shall go then, but not till then."[9] In 1917 he writes to his father,

> To me all this war *enthusiasm* seems a bit unreal, because of the mixture of motives. But I see the war partly through the eyes of men who have been and returned, and who view it, even when convinced of the rightness of the cause, in a very different way, as something very sordid and disagreeable which they must be put through. That would be my spirit.[10]

There is a tone of disdain or disinterestedness about this: a desire to hold the fact of war at arm's length. In these letters there is not a flicker of regret or lament for the men he knew, or whose work he knew, such as Gaudier-Brzeska and T. E. Hulme, who were killed in the war, nor, apparently, anxiety about others: "I haven't the remotest idea whether Aldington is conscripted or not, and don't care and as a matter of fact have never met him, but I believe H.D. is doing his part of the *Egoist*."[11] The one exception to this indifference seems to be the dedication of *Prufrock and Other Observations* "For Jean Verdenal, 1889–1915, mort

aux Dardanelles".

Elsewhere, these letters of the war period are replete with the sense of Eliot's pleasure at life in London, the beauties of its physical landscape, his preoccupations at the bank and the progress of his writing. The sense of living through a period of public crisis is remarkably absent. His one voiced anxiety (apart from the matter of his health) was what would happen to Vivien if he volunteered, or was conscripted, and this anxiety kept him from making efforts to serve until as late as July 1918.

III

I bring up these matters not in order to impugn Eliot for a want of military nerve, but to support my view that, if the war has some bearing upon the mood of *The Waste Land*, this can only be so in a generalised and unspecific way; and that the origins of the poem's making lie in crises which are personal rather than public. Such a view, if from different perspectives, has been proposed by Richard Poirier and other recent commentators on Eliot, most notably Maud Ellmann. Poirier writes that in 1923 Eliot "was anxious to justify a 'method' more his own, and on historical–cultural grounds that might possibly dissuade readers from discovering, with I. A. Richards, that his poem was as much about sexual sterility as about immense panoramas".[12] Eliot is, for Poirier, a vivid example of "how writers like to endow their own practices with historical inevitability and large consequence", which in turn "promotes the notion that in their work the rest of us can recover meanings that would otherwise yield to chaos or to the blandishments of meaningless pleasure".

Similarly, though from opposed perspectives, Maud Ellmann gives an adversarial reading of the theory of impersonality in Eliot and Pound, and writes a view of *The Waste Land* as a hollow echoing construct whose voices reverberate to their own indeterminacy. The poem is, she argues, a sphinx without a secret, a poem which has been so thoroughly explained that it is rarely read at all, and she urges that "it is more instructive to be scrupulously superficial than to dig beneath the surface of the poem's buried skeletons or sources".[13] For John Vickery's hero–protagonist questing for some putative Grail, Ellmann substitutes a speaker who cannot be identified with his creator, not "because he has a *different* personality, like Prufrock, but because he has no stable identity at all. The disembodied 'I' glides in and out of stolen texts, as if the speaking subject were merely the quotation of its antecedents." In place of the analysis of moral and cultural destitution that the poem is reputed

to present – as in the incident of the typist and her lover – Ellmann reads a misogyny "so ferocious, particularly in the manuscript, that it begins to turn into a blasphemy against itself. For the poem is enthralled by the femininity that it reviles, bewitched by this odorous and shoreless flesh."

Though Ellmann's language is violent, there is no doubt a residual misogyny in some of Eliot's letters of this period, quite alien to Frazer's non-judgemental presentation of female sexuality. The difference between them is more than a distinction of genres. Frazer can deal dispassionately with such intimacies as the sacred rites of prostitution, and warns against assumptions of moral superiority towards the practices of past civilisations, whereas for Eliot even his literary professionalism is conditioned by misogny. For example, a letter to Pound of 7 November 1922 expresses Eliot's difficulties in getting Lady Rothermere to accept his editorial privilege in determining who and what get into *The Criterion*. This letter is full of animus against both Lady Rothermere and Katherine Mansfield, who is characterised as "one of the most persistent and thickskinned toadies and one of the vulgarest women Lady R. has ever met and is also a sentimental crank".[14] If this is motivated by a dislike of one woman, then what of this which follows in the same letter:

> My own idea is that the way to make a review is to make it as unliterary as possible: there are only half a dozen men of letters (and no women) worth printing, better get good people from other occupations who at least write about something they know something about. (This is NOT for publication to Lady R. or anyone else.) I want Sir J. Frazer, Trotter, Eddington, Sherrington or people like that. Also historians if they can write.

It is a sobering experience to look through the volumes of *The Criterion* for contributions by women writers: they are extremely sparse.

Naturally John Vickery's treatment of the women in *The Waste Land* takes quite a different route. In discussing "A Game of Chess" and "The Fire Sermon" he goes back to Frazer to trace the origins of the women in these sections, and to comment on their impugned sexuality in Eliot's poem, cut loose as they are from a knowledge of the sacred purpose of their potency in the ancient rituals Frazer lists. For example:

> Particularly in the boudoir scene elaborate descriptions intimate more than merely the physical existence of their objects. The whole of this section is not only an indictment of life in the present but also an

> elaborate ritual of inversion. "A Game of Chess" parodies, with tragic overtones, a cohesive world that is primitive only in the sense of being primary.[15]

I make two observations here. First, nothing in the boudoir scene (ll. 77–110) relates what is depicted to "life in the present": in a true sense, its temporal location is out of time, for its principal sources are literary rather than social – the passage is a brilliant pastiche of Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's regal approach to Antony, and the satiric animus derives from Belinda's boudoir scene in Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. It is well to remember that cancelled passage of "The Fire Sermon" about "The white-armed Fresca", written in imitation of Pope's rhymed couplets, of which Pound wisely observed, "you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope – and you can't". My second observation is this: Vickery imputes a homogeneous unity to the primitive cultures Frazer describes, irrespective of differences of location, of racial or tribal custom, of competing systems of belief, and so on; he seems blandly to accept Frazer's representation of early history as offering a "cohesive world", primitive only because original. As far as I understand these matters, it is precisely such assumptions of universality of belief and practice that have called Frazer's entire enterprise into question for later anthropologists. Nor does Vickery take the opportunity to ally what we might regard as pertinent matter from one source with another. For Cleopatra, the missing referent in Vickery's account of the boudoir scene, is elsewhere described by Shakespeare as "the serpent of Old Nile" whose erotic power has snared Antony and holds him from his proper duties. Her world is that of Osiris, one of the ancient deities treated in the volumes of *The Golden Bough* to which Eliot explicitly refers in his note about Frazer.

The notion of Cleopatra's serpentine sexuality and its destructive effects might have been brought to bear on what Vickery proposes about the Tiresias passage of "The Fire Sermon". However, because the mythical histories of Tiresias associate him with snakes, Vickery is led to an extraordinary vigour of explicatory excess, in what follows:

> Were the shoddiness of modern sexual mores Eliot's sole concern, the scene could have stood by itself, and there would have been no need to introduce Tiresias or to point out the anthropological significance of his experience. Clearly the typist and the "young man carbuncular" are to be equated with the coiling serpents seen by Tiresias. These serpents represent two apparently disparate but related powers – the

> corruption of mortality and the fertility of life. According to *The Golden Bough*, snakes are associated with the souls of the dead. With this, Tiresias' reason for calling the clerk "one of the low" and for saying that he himself "walked among the lowest of the dead" becomes apparent. As snakes, the typist and the clerk are dead; and as dead, they have the form of snakes.[16]

Is it too literal-minded of me to observe that of course there are no snakes in the lines to which Vickery here refers? It is one thing to argue that Tiresias sees the copulating couple as resembling the snakes which are a signal part of his own history; it is another to assert that those snakes are there, and, further, that they are dead. And, if the notion of Tiresias's metaphorical view of this scene still has some purchase, the speaking voice within or behind him, with its clear-cut social and sexual discriminations (all that fascinated disgust at the typist's underwear), sounds a different note. If Tiresias is a wearily reluctant witness to a scene he finds repugnant, the language of social and sexual disdain is Eliot's.

In addition, what Vickery's account of the relationship between Eliot's poem and *The Golden Bough* does is to create another sub-text to the poem, one that, instead of deriving from the poem itself, with its powerful rhythms and vocable anxieties, seeks to mediate between the poem and its sources. Consider Madame Sosostris for a moment. Eliot somewhere acknowledges that her name was borrowed from Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow*. But Vickery notes that according to Frazer the effigy of Death was often thought to possess "a vivifying and quickening influence" on the living. Madame Sosostris presents the antithesis of that attitude as she warns her interlocutor to "fear death by water". And her attitude, says Vickery, "was characteristic of the ancient Egyptians with whom she is also associated by name". Now, we must accept her as a false or unseeing "prophet", one who traduces the sacred rites of prophecy to social and material occasions; and yes, certainly, her name may well derive from the Egyptian conqueror Sesostris "mentioned by Frazer", as Vickery notes. But what about this:

> I sit at the head of a table flanked by Mrs. Howells and Mrs. Sloggett. Both are mad. Mrs. Howells is a spiritualist, and wanted to give me a mental treatment for a cold in the head. She writes articles on the New Mysticism etc., for a paper called the *Superman*, and presents them to me. Mrs. Sloggett writes me letters beginning Dear Teacher,

> Philosopher and Friend, and her special interests are astrology and politics.[17]

It will be objected that I am merely substituting one source for another; and that is true. But these letters, which Eliot did not intend us to see, give some clue as to his workings. His personal history Eliot could not, finally, control, and the mask of impersonality is gently nudged aside. The only other moment in the poem like this is the poignant line contributed by Vivien Eliot – "What you get married for/if you don't want children?"

Vickery has gone as far in the explicatory mode as it is possible to go; but when the poem finds its own voice we do not need to appeal to an extraneous anthropological authority. The moments I have quoted derive their essential power not from Frazer, but from Eliot. In "Death by Water" we hear the intimations of mortality in the arresting harmony of his verse:

> O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
> Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

The relationship between *The Waste Land* and *The Golden Bough* is one not of dependence, but of suggestive intimacy and a desired equivalence. For Eliot, Frazer is an independent authoritative voice whose power resides largely in his style. This style, Ackerman tells us, was carefully nurtured during his student years and later. I illustrate it from the volume of the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* entitled *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*:

> For when all is said and done our resemblances to the savage are still far more numerous than our differences from him; and what we have in common with him, and deliberately retain as true and useful, we owe to our savage forefathers who slowly acquired by experience and transmitted to us by inheritance those seemingly fundamental ideas which we are apt to regard as original and intuitive. We are like heirs to a fortune which has been handed down for so many ages that the memory of those who built it up is lost, and its possessors for the time being regard it as having been an original and unalterable possession of their race since the beginning of the world. But reflection and enquiry should satisfy us that to our predecessors we are indebted for much of what we thought most our own, and that their errors were not wilful extravagances or the ravings of insanity, but simply

> hypotheses, justifiable as such at the time when they were propounded, but which a fuller experience has proved to be inadequate.[18]

The author of the Sweeney poems would have heard the voice of a humanistic authority in these lines.

NOTES

1. T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 80.
2. Vickery, pp. 233–79, especially p. 239.
3. Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1890–1930* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 106.
4. T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth", *The Dial*, November 1923; repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 175–8. An earlier assessment by Eliot of Frazer's importance for modern thought may be found in the lecture "The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual", the manuscript of which is in the John Hayward Bequest at the Library of King's College, Cambridge, under Section B (Philosophical Essays). A later assessment may be found in the article "A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors, Writers who though Masters of Thought, are likewise Masters of Art", *Vanity Fair*, XXI, no. 6 (February 1924), 28–9. Both are discussed at length in Piers Gray, *T. S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development 1909–22* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1982).
5. GB 2, II, 97–119.
6. Fred Eggan, "100 Years of Ethnology and Social Anthropology", in J. O. Brew (ed.), *One Hundred Years of Anthropology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 122.
7. Vickery, pp. 243–4.
8. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), I: *1898–1922*, p. 171.
9. Ibid., p. 174.
10. Ibid., p. 183.
11. Ibid., p. 145.
12. Richard Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature: Emersonian Reflections* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), pp. 6–7.
13. Maud Ellmann, *The Poetics of Impersonality: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1987), p. 92.
14. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, p. 593.
15. Vickery, p. 258.
16. Vickery, p. 262.
17. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, p. 168.
18. *GB 3*, III, 422.

XI

"CARNIVALS OF MASS-MURDER": THE FRAZERIAN ORIGINS OF WYNDHAM LEWIS'S *THE CHILDERMASS*

Peter L. Caracciolo

I

WHETHER *The Childermass* (1928) seems one of the most impressive or the most baffling of Wyndham Lewis's creations rather depends on how this neglected modernist experiment is first encountered. Many years ago it was my good fortune to be spellbound by a repeat of D. G. Bridson's radio dramatisation for the BBC Third Programme (1951, 1955). Subsequently coming to read the trilogy (1955–6), I must confess that, while I remained gripped by its often sublime sequels *Monstre Gai* and *Malign Fiesta*, the first part of *The Human Age* left me, as others, perplexed.[1]

Excited as one may well be by the initial vision of the unearthly scene "Outside Heaven", progressively a smokescreen of enigma envelops the reader. What exactly is this oasis besieged by Satanic forces, incinerated locusts falling like shrapnel; and that mysterious Magnetic City across the river, is it really the "New Jerusalem" (p. 143)? As to the odd couple haunting this weird shore, why does Pullman bear more than a passing likeness to James Joyce (who in 1928 had thirteen years left to devote to his epic punning)? Curious too that Pullman's afterlife companion Satterthwaite is the caricature of a public-school fag. More disturbingly, memories of active service on the Western Front afflict them both. "Satters" walks "with a shell-shock waggle" (p. 12); "these condensations of the red dusty fog" seem "to the frightened wartime soul of the startled Satters, angels of Mons . . . ghosts of battle" (p. 13); "He grovels before Nurse Pullman . . . the victim of the devils of Humour, of war, pestilence and famine" (p. 52). There, true enough, the Apocalypse does flickeringly illuminate the No Man's Land across which these traumatised veterans pick their way back to camp. The static nature of trench-fighting in the Great War meant that the front line literally faced the land of the dead: over the devastated landscape of Flanders and France among the ruins of homes not unlike their own were strewn the decaying corpses of

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

fellow combatants.

Other difficulties are less easily resolved. Especially puzzling is the look worn by both this Last Assize and its judge who decides the fate of the petitioners awaiting the ferry across the Styx. Although these posthumous sessions are held in a classicial amphitheatre, the Judgement Seat takes the form of a puppeteer's booth, and when the justice arrives we quickly recognise the resemblance to an old childhood acquaintance – one who (we recall) vanquished both Death and the Devil. To what genre exactly does this work belong that, while casting a spell over the radio, proves so difficult to read? Why this atmosphere of Saturnalia, with a figure out of the Italian carnival? Why the series of judicial murders punctuated with grim jests about rebirth, alongside the parodies of "Mr Joys of Potluck . . . whom men called Crossword-Joys" (p. 172)? Why the debates concerning space–time and reality between a degraded Highlander and the substitute of a substitute? For presiding is no Judge of the Dead known to antiquity: neither Pluto nor Osiris, not even St Peter, but Mr Punch alias the Bailiff. *The Childermass* is mined with problems; therefore it is a relief to discover that an important set of clues lie hidden in *The Golden Bough* and its subsidiary growths – these clues facilitating some exploration of Lewis's formidable maze.

Elsewhere I have suggested that the supernatural oasis in Lewis's vision of the afterlife came from the religious imagination of Western Asia, the supernatural beliefs of the ancient Babylonians and Persians.[2] The fact that in one of Lewis's libraries there was a copy of the abridged edition of Frazer's *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* (1923) indicates a probable way by which, in the British Museum Reading Room, Lewis became further acquainted with the Zoroastrian religion – and its heresies which feature so prominently a fearful time god. Reciprocally, an allusion to one of the greatest of the Waverley novels, in Frazer's account of the Flood, doubtless reminded Lewis of how these profound folktales of Western Asia could be used to reflect the follies and vices of modern Europe.[3] In varying degrees, the Babylonian cosmogony fertilised the creeds of the surrounding peoples and their successors: Persian, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim. These intricate patterns of acculturation are signposted by Frazer's scholarly apparatus, which, in the three-volume edition, conveys information in a scheme of increasing complexity. Amid a survey of the worldwide myths of a universal deluge, section 6 of chapter IV focuses on "Supposed Persian Stories of a Great Flood". There the eye is caught by a marginal gloss:

> Another ancient Persian story relates how the gods resolved to destroy most living creatures by a severe winter and deep snow, and how warned by them, the sage Yima took refuge from the threatened calamity in a blissful enclosure into which he gathered the seeds of men, of animals and of fire.[4]

Frazer's text itself amplifies this synopsis of a Noachian story from a sacred book of the Zoroastrians. The *Zend-Avesta* gives particulars of the ark-like enclosure of Yima; these details of the Var (as this enclosure is called) parallel the arrangements and purpose of Lewis's Magnetic City, and "the dynasty of Noah" (*Childermass*, p. 144) in the Bailiff's concentration camp across the river: a warm oasis in a Gobi desert bordering on the afterworld where, during cycles of time vaster than those to which our own culture accustoms us, the somewhat androgynous elect can shelter from an assault launched by malign spiritual forces. The guidance offered the reader by Frazer's apparatus does not stop there. From the footnotes and the authorities that Frazer cites, the modern satirist was able to requisition more ammunition with which to expose the weaknesses of twentieth century culture. The Var is contiguous with the roosting-place of a mystical bird, just as in the middle of *The Childermass* the Phoenix comes to nest (pp. 136–43). Both the Var and the Magnetic City are not distant from the Judgement Seat and that dangerous crossing from this world to the next – whether via the razor-edged Chinvat bridge or an equally perilous river ferry. Like Osiris, Yima became a King of the Dead; Yima, though, was eventually corrupted by demonic luxury. As with the Padishah who rules in Lewis's Magnetic City (*Monstre Gai*, pt XIII), Yima is deceived by the Fiend, and God's favour goes to Mithra, the Angel of Judgement. Significantly, among the sacred images of Mithraism, a cult that came close to challenging the place of Christianity in the late Roman Empire, a common icon shows Mithra in Phrygian cap stabbing the sacred bull, a scene which is often so framed that it looks rather similar to the bloody business conducted in the Punch and Judy show – and in fact "mithraic horns" decorate the Bailiff's "puppet-theatre" (*Childermass*, p. 125).

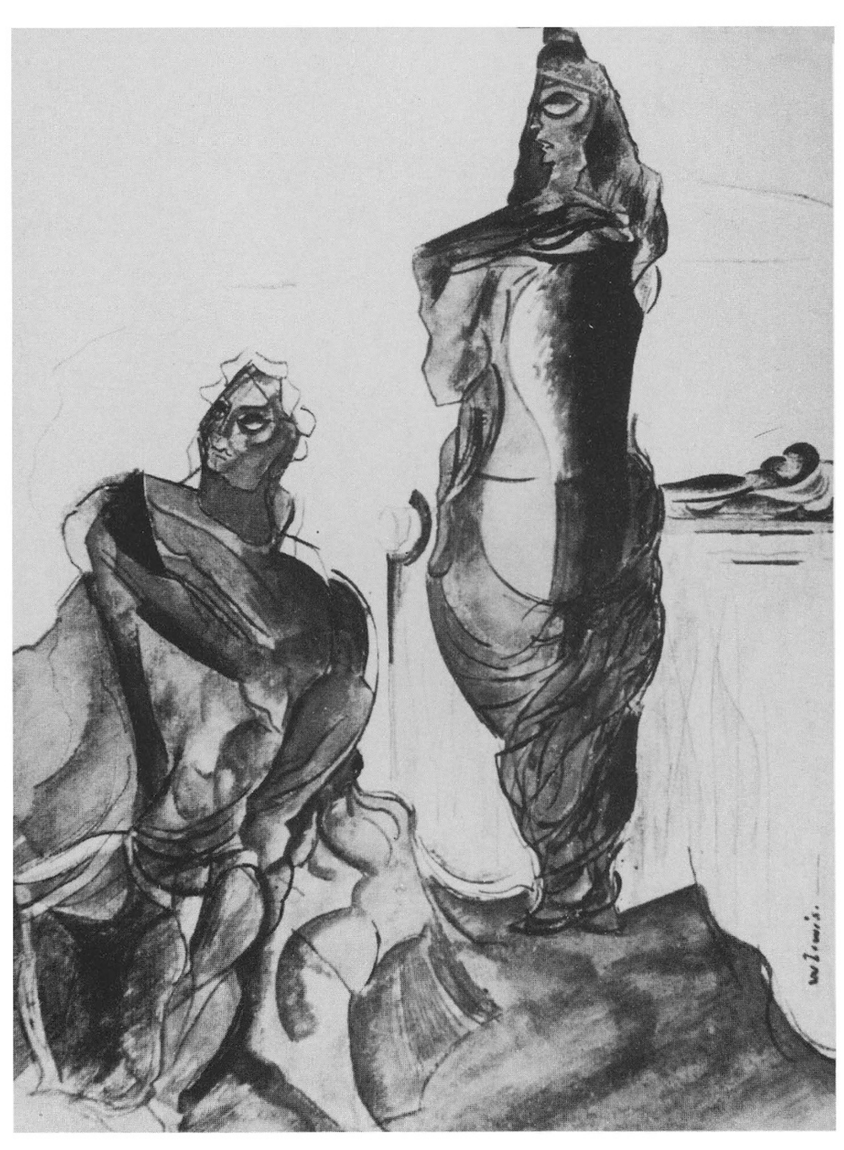
Frazer's contemporary the continental scholar Franz Cumont had obviously been the ultimate source of Lewis's knowledge concerning Mithraism.[5] It seems equally clear that the heretical myths about the destructive time god Zervan had supplied Lewis with weapons for attacking twentieth-century thinkers, such as Bergson, Einstein and Freud, who stressed the role of time. However, since Frazer's extensive references to Cumont are found not in *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*

but in his discussions of Mithra and the Greek time god Cronos, discussions that occur principally in *The Dying God*, the *Adonis, Attis Osiris* volumes and *The Scapegoat*, it is evident where one might hope to find a fuller set of keys by which the meaning of *The Childermass* might be unlocked.

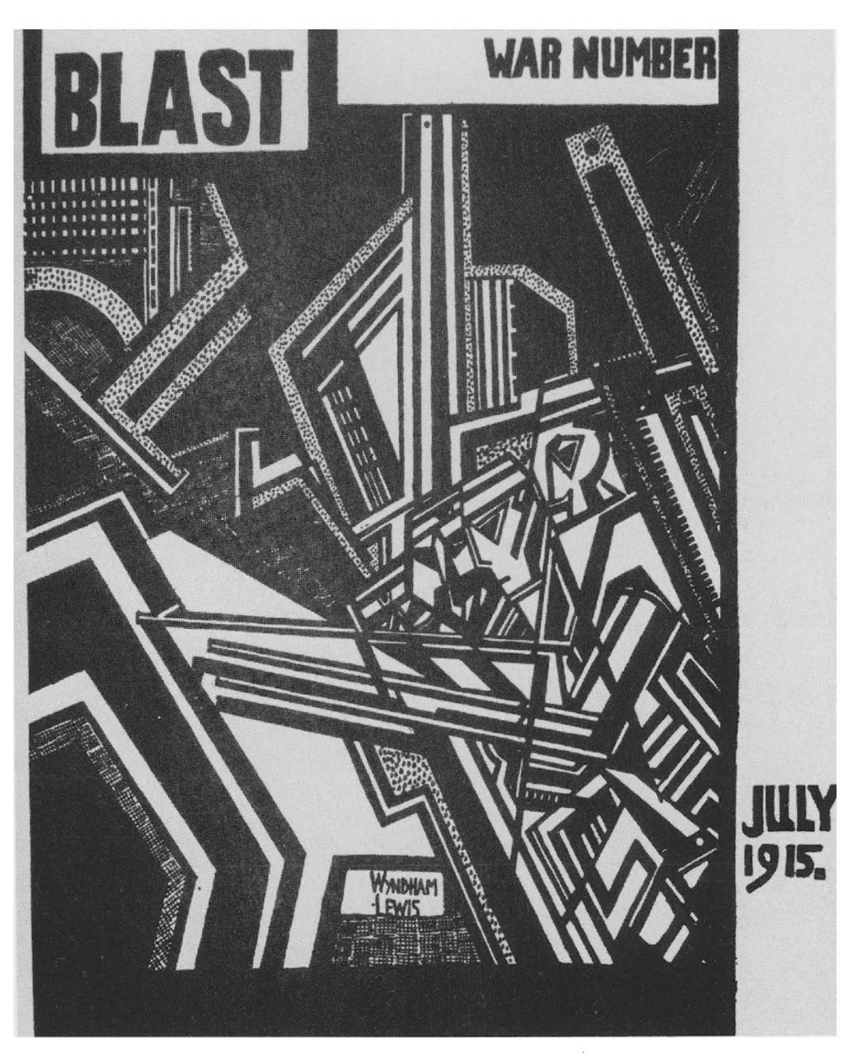
II

Before venturing into this labyrinth, it is necessary to consider how early its creator came to know *The Golden Bough*, and the degree to which his expanding knowledge of Frazer enabled the ever more satirical Lewis to make sense of a world slipping from crisis to crisis. Among a number of insightful commentaries on Lewis's difficult early work, one of the most illuminating is provided by Alan Munton's "The Transformations of Carnival".[6] In this otherwise perceptive and far-reaching survey, Munton, alas, applies to Lewis's experiments the somewhat anachronistic and indeed politically alien views of the carnivalesque taken by the Soviet critic Bakhtin in his study of Rabelais. Tellingly, Lewis's earliest contact with the discussion of Carnival in *The Golden Bough* is not that easy to disentangle from what one might call his own "field-work". As Munton notes, Lewis was "enthusiastic about the Carnivals of his own time".[7] In a letter of 1906 the young artist describes how he himself participated in the Munich festivities, enjoying the drink, dancing and sexual freedom, that temporary suspension of normal manners traditionally licensed at Carnival. In August 1908 Lewis explored an area of the Celtic Twilight, describing in a diary his experiences at a "Pardon or Breton fête".[8] During a story with the Swiftian title "Brobdingnag", acutely he notes that a pervasive unease typifies such peasant festivities: more than conventions are broken, the abuse goes beyond the verbal, and when wives are battered the drunkard may be unpleasantly surprised to find Fate lending a hand. A volatile mixture of the comic and the aggressive recurs in the stories that emerge from Lewis's Breton travels. Of "Les Saltimbanques" (which was published in the August 1909 issue of the *English Review*) Bernard Lafourcade observes that the story "reflects the new intellectual interests of the age in anthropology . . . he must have been acquainted in some way or other with the work of Durkheim and Frazer, and possibly with that of Lévy-Bruhl and Van Gennep".[9]

If Lafourcade is right, then Lewis must be reckoned as one of the exceptions among the first wave of modernists. In a recent study of the influence of "primitivism" on the likes of Picasso, William Rubin is



1. *Eleusis: Demeter and Persephone* (1912), pen and ink, pencil and water-colour.



2. The cover-design for *BLAST*, No. 2.

sceptical as to whether this *avant-garde* knew anything much about the anthropological context of the African and other "savage" artefacts that entered their collections and influenced innovatory achievements such as *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907).[10] However, Lewis had first-hand experience of the primitive culture that inspired *Kermesse* – his painting which, when exhibited in the summer of 1912, was hailed as the nearest English equivalent of Picasso's epoch-making creation.[11] As for a story that Lewis claimed was the first he ever wrote – "The Death of the Ankou", a compelling account of how the young narrator may have outfaced the Breton death god himself – it is hard to believe that he did not have some idea of what was in Frazer's *The Dying God* (1911).[12] And what of the name "Brobdingnag"? Had Lewis any knowledge, prior to the 1913 publication of *Balder the Beautiful*, of the account Frazer gives there concerning the wicker-work carnival giants that were once such a memorable feature of the north French *fête des fols*? Or did Lewis discover the identical epithet that Frazer uses to describe one of these "giants" in a source also explored by the mythographer?[13]

With *BLAST*, no. 2 (July 1915), it is possible to glimpse more distinctly the shadow of *The Golden Bough* upon Lewis's art. The German invasion of France is seen in terms of rape, imagery which in its "anticipation" of *Tarr* (his sardonic novel about Bohemian life in pre-war Paris) indicates a profounder awareness of how beneath the polite surface of civilised life lurk savage patterns of behaviour that will periodically erupt.[14] In his "Editorial" for the *WAR NUMBER* of *BLAST*, Lewis writes "The monstrous carnival of this race's thwarted desires and ambitions is what 1914 has sprung upon us."

In the cover design for *BLAST*, no. 2 (see plate 2), the shapes are a threatening jigsaw of the mechanical and the savage. At first one is struck more by the typically verbal–visual pun on "riflemen"; then one notices that this squad patrolling Antwerp's defences has been recruited from a dismantled totem pole. As Epstein observed, "Lewis' drawing has the qualities of sculpture"[15] and the faces of these "primitive mercenaries" – as if carved from wood – resemble the work of the Canadian Indians. In the 1890s the great ethnologist Franz Boas "discovered" on the north-west coast of Canada some of the world's finest sculpture, and Lewis apparently had been looking at the masks of the "wild men" carved by these Indian sculptors, perhaps too at the disguises worn in eastern Canada by the Iroquois.[16] Lewis's North American origins would have attracted him also to Frazer's description in *The Scapegoat* (1911) of how, during their periodic expulsion of evils, the Iroquois "inaugurated the new year . . . with a kind of saturnalia . . . Men clothed in the skins

of wild beasts, their faces covered with hideous masks" roamed through the wigwams.[17] Indeed, the associated Iroquois sacrifice of the White Dog sheds light on one of Lewis's most affecting stories about those who returned from the Front – "The French Poodle", which was published by the non-combatant Pound in the March 1916 issue of *The Egoist*,[18] a year after Gaudier-Brzeska, a close friend of both Lewis and Pound, fell in action.

"The French Poodle" concerns the fate of Rob Cairn, who in 1915 is home on sick leave: "the trenches had scarred his mind". Before the war Cairn had been an architect in partnership with one James Fraser, "who because of heart-trouble" had been unable to join the army.[19] Fraser sympathises with his anguished friend. "What can happen to a man inside who is blown up in the air?" Shellshock has left Cairn feeling deeply "insecure"; "Irruptions of all instincts are . . . inevitable in modern life". Fraser's objections meet with a terrible answer:

> Did not men in every time kill and beat one another? . . . Men loved each other better formerly . . . I have never killed any animal . . . not knowingly . . . but I have killed men . . . and I did not mind killing men . . . I hardly knew what killing meant.

Lewis too enlisted in the artillery, where you "never killed anyone [you] could see properly".[20]

Cairn's interlocutor then uses a metaphor that might well have been plucked from his learned namesake's work: "Your gunner's scalps are very abstract". Cairn ponders over

> the incompleteness of modern life, whether the savagery we arrive at were better than the savagery we come from. "Since we must be savage, is not a real savage better than a sham one?" . . . So Cairn was a tired man, and his fancy set out on a pilgrimage to some patriarchal plain.

In such a state he bought his French poodle and "he loved him like a brother". Cairn (whose name recalls another breed of terrier; significantly, it does not take the normal Scottish form "Cairns") so pampers the poodle that one cannot but suspect that it has become his totem animal – especially when he names it "Carp", the totem of an Otawa Indian clan and, moreover, symbolic of the martial virtues, perseverance and Christ.[21] These hints in turn evoke the darker connotations of "Cairn". When the dog is killed ("It nearly screamed the place down, poor brute!"), the

master's remorseful groans remind Fraser of the howling of a dog. Cairn's face is "a scared and bitter mask": "What a coward I am! . . . I'm only glad of one thing. I *know* I shall pay for it . . . I have killed my best living luck." Two weeks after his return to France Cairn is dead. "He understood the mechanism of his destiny better than his partner."

In one sense this poignant story, like all true art, is independent of its sources; in other ways, though, reference to *The Golden Bough* is enlightening about a relationship that Lewis's Fraser describes "with a great wealth of friendly savagery". In *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* Frazer notes that among the Otawa Indians, for example, hunts involving totem animals were religiously prepared; before setting out, expiatory sacrifices were offered to the souls of animals previously slain.[22] Later in the same chapter a footnote refers to the Iroquois White Dog ceremonies.[23] The fullest account of this rite is given in chapter IV of *The Scapegoat*, where, intrigued by the pawky manner in which Frazer introduces the Iroquois, the reader cannot ignore the Scottish parallels. Annually in the western Himalayas after feasting a dog a certain tribe would stone it to death. Similarly,

> in some parts of Breadalbane (Perthshire) it was formerly the custom on New Year's Day to take a dog to the door, give him a bit of bread and drive him out saying: "Get away you dog! Whatever death of men . . . would happen in this house to the end of the present year may it all light on your head."[24]

The account then following of the Amerindian sacrifice of the White Dog not only is associated (by a marginal gloss) with the Jewish Scapegoat but also recalls the grisly custom reported of the Iroquois's traditional enemies the Huron, in *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*, whereby a dog surrogate was killed to propitiate the war god.[25]

In the serio-comic story "The French Poodle" a crazy half-belief in barbarous practices marks Cairn out as a poignant victim of what Lewis terms "Inferior Religions". The important essay which bears this phrase as title "was most probably meant at first as an introduction to" a volume of short stories focusing on the absurdity of peasant habits. Owing to the death in France of every member of the original publishing firm, the collection did not appear until 1927, when it was published in revised form as *The Wild Body*.[26] As with "The French Poodle", the phrasing and imagery of the pre-1917 essay suggest Lewis's growing awareness that the disciplines of this most unnatural war were now reducing to the level of automata even members of his own class. The Signorelliesque A

Battery Shelled (1919), which Lewis painted when eventually he was recruited by the Canadians as a war artist, may depict the young officers in the posture of Dante and Virgil gazing down at the puppet-like figures of the damned other ranks,[27] nevertheless it was in the Great War, hunted by the terrifying partnership of a German observer in a sausage balloon and the enemy howitzers whose deadly fire he directed, that Lewis began his political education. Thus he emphasises in those engagingly thoughtful memoirs *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), "as day by day I sidestepped and dodged the missiles that were hurled at me . . . I become a politician".[28] This process was eventually to issue in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *The Lion and the Fox* and *Time and Western Man* (both 1927). Although, as the war memoirs make plain, Lewis admired Plato's *Republic*, in deliberately concerning himself with not how society might be but how it is now, *The Art of Being Ruled* resembles more Cicero's *De Re Publica*.[29] *Time and Western Man* and *The Lion and the Fox*, in their different ways, are political studies too. The former modulates from a study of the arts of the twentieth century into an investigation of modern science and philosophy, exposing ways in which the new ideas of time have sapped the will of the individual. *The Lion and the Fox* explores the Machiavellian culture of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. None of these three books lacks an anthropological element. Indeed, references to *The Dying God* and *The Scapegoat* play a vital part in the Shakespearean study.[30] This longstanding interest in Frazer helps explain why T. S. Eliot commissioned Lewis to review anthropological books, and why Edgell Rickword published Lewis's comparison of the Cambridge ritualists with the anti-Frazerian Egyptologist Grafton Elliot Smith. Lewis was exhilarated by Elliot Smith, but, though he admired Francis Cornford, another member of Frazer's Cambridge circle, Jane Harrison, was dismissed as confused.[31]

Given this *embarras de richesses*, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937) does provide a convenient overview of the role Frazer played in Lewis's politico-metaphysical development during the period when he was working on *The Childermass*. Dwelling on the causes of what he saw as "Armageddon Number one" and endeavouring to prevent the approach of "Armageddon Number two",[32] Lewis's vocabulary grows increasingly Frazerian:

> almost all wars are promoted . . . at the expense of fools, their cannon-fodder. . . . But the greatest wickedness of all . . . is the perpetuation of foolishness which these carnivals of mass-murder involve.[33]

> This organized breakdown in our civilized manners must have a rationale . . . *who* was proposing to kill or maim me? I developed a certain inquisitiveness upon that point . . . it was not my German opposite number. He, like myself, was an instrument . . . we were all on a fool's errand. . . . The scapegoat-on-the-spot did not appeal to me. . . . The incompetent general was clearly such a very secondary thing compared with the . . . unscrupulous politician. . . . There was not much sense in blaming the ancestors of the community to which I belonged for the murderous nonsense in which I found myself, up to the neck.[34]

Remembering the "sea of mud" across which, like wild game, he had been stalked by German howitzers, Lewis harboured Manichean suspicions: "I am never sure that there is not an Observer up above us, like the Observer in the sausage balloon . . . one who is quite capable to setting a battery on to one, and . . . causing the fire to be more *personal*".[35] So Frazerian does the imagery of *Blasting and Bombardiering* grow that it is possible to identify which volumes in *The Golden Bough* Lewis found most instructive:

> The saturnalia that accompanies such fevered conditions was there too [on the "Home Front"]. . . . The saturnalian picture I obtained glimpses of elsewhere . . . [for] the so-called "ruling class" today are busy committing themselves and their country all over again to the same unprofitable adventure.[36]

Significantly, in the two pages devoted to this particular discussion of the Great War and of the world conflict then preparing there are no fewer than three references to "saturnalia". Only a few pages earlier, with hints of the masquerades and the social inversions characteristic of "carnival", Lewis notes, "All the fancy-dress nonsense of 'officers' and 'men', under the snobbish English system, is a subject distinct from war, and yet very much involved with it."[37] This complex of ideas, diction and imagery points to volume IX of *The Golden Bough*. For in *The Scapegoat* we find that chapters IV and V ("Public Scapegoats" and "Scapegoats in Genera"), together with chapter VIII ("The Saturnalia and Kindred Festivals"), frame investigations of human sacrifice in classical antiquity and the bloody shambles of "Killing the God in Mexico".

Although these are not the only perspectives on *The Apes of God* (1930), the decoding of that arcane Menippean satire upon the English cultural establishment is greatly assisted by recognition of the strong

Frazerian presence in "Mr Zagreus and the Split-Man" (XI, ii), a version of which Eliot published in *The Criterion* in 1924.[38] The legend of Zagreus is given in *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*.[39] Zagreus, the child of Zeus and Persephone, clambered onto his father's throne and, as "he was looking at himself in a mirror", the Titans attacked him. For a while he evaded their assault by shape-changing successively into Zeus, Cronos, a young man, a series of animals, until "finally in the form of a bull he was cut to pieces". Frazer comments, "such traditions point to a custom of temporarily investing the king's son with the royal dignity as a preliminary to sacrificing him." An unpleasant sense of the hecatomb gathers over the scene in *The Apes of God* where Mr Zagreus completes his toilet before "the mirror".[40] His costume is telling even down to details such as the pouch, on one side of which "was the figure of a bull".[41] A guarantee that this information comes direct from *The Golden Bough* is the fact that occasionally Lewis copies Frazer almost word for word. Thus, when Lewis describes Mr Zagreus's "Anguinum" we have a digest of Frazer's account of "snakestones", which, "best fashioned on May Day", are

> generated . . . from slaver shot . . . into the air from [the reptiles'] hissing jaws . . . a man bold enough to catch one of [them] in his cloak before it touched the ground [gains power]. The Druids hold these in high esteem, [their] virtue [securing] access to Kings.[42]

Mr Zagreus seeks admittance to that sanctum of High Society "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party", where he plans to ape the "divine magician"; hence too the "Bezoar Stone", an instrument of rain-making for this wasteland.[43]

Mr Zagreus's boastful "I am a moonraker"[44] hints at the darker side to such foolery. Grimly redolent of the shambles accompanying the sacrifice of human representatives of the Aztec gods in a nexus of images that herald this mock epiphany:

> clothes hanging like a carcass in a stall gaping and sagging – handless, footless, and without head. . . . A green feather at the side from the crest of Huitzlipochtli. . . . He would hold a six-foot long yellow cane-wand, representing a corn stalk, surmounted by a gigantic ear of wheat – a relic of Quetzalcoatl's millennium, rescued by a Spanish priest from the destruction of the temple of Cholula.[45]

In "Killing the God in Mexico", Frazer recounts how in May "the great

god Huitzilopochtli" was worshipped "arrayed in all the ornaments of the deity", as at Cholula the god Quetzalcoatl, whose "image ... had the body of a man but the head of a bird surmounted by a crest, the face dyed yellow".[46] Certainly the Mexican pantheon and their representatives were decked with necklaces of "maizecobs" and befeathered. The salt goddess, whose name sounds practically the same as "Huitzilopochtli", bore a headdress of "waving green plumes".[47] But ghastlier were the garments worn by the Aztec priests at their great feasts. In the same chapter of *The Scapegoat* Frazer notes that among

> the men who masqueraded in the skins of the human victims [were those who] assumed the ornaments and ... names of ... deities such as Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl, the ceremony of investing them with the skins and insignia of divinity was called by [a term meaning] "think themselves gods".[48]

These nauseous practices are brought closer to home when we remember that in the preceding volume of *The Golden Bough* (VIII), in a chapter that by its title, "Eating the God", makes the parallel explicit, Frazer connects the Mexican transubstantiation celebrated at the winter solstice with "the loaves in human form" baked at Nemi; for the latter were possibly eaten sacramentally to the accompaniment of human sacrifice.[49] A like configuration of violence and communion explains why in *The Apes of God* Mr Zagreus carries an Easter egg in his pouch.[50] In *The Scapegoat* Frazer notes that on Good Friday in the Slavonic areas of Germany and Austria men went around beating every girl and woman they met, the victims sometimes being expected to reward "their tormentors with a present of red Easter Eggs".[51] As the Mexicans, like "good Christians at Easter [would] partake of meat after the long abstinence of Lent", so too there were the equivalent Aztec "smacks".[52]

Nevertheless the Thoth allusions in part XI of *The Apes of God*[53] recall at least one male willing to protect the female from such patriarchal abuse. The trickster god of ancient Egypt intervened in a marital feud between the deities Ra and Nut. Thoth released the sky goddess from an interminable pregnancy by making the necessary calendar adjustment to harmonise solar with lunar time. This account of the invention of those intercalary days that are celebrated in the Twelve Nights of Christmas (and such periods of dangerous upheaval as Carnival, or during pre-Christian times at Saturnalia) is given twice in *The Golden Bough*, both in *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* and in *The Scapegoat*.[54] Clearly Frazer devotes a great deal of effort to investigating the rationale behind the violent outbursts that typify the absurd reign of nominal rulers at such

perilous festivities; thus the clutter of references to *The Scapegoat* (and allied volumes) in Zagreus's "fancy dress" can imply no other purpose than the one traditional at Carnival time: the expulsion of evil from society. At Lord Osmund's Lenten party the exposure of Zagreus the self-proclaimed shaman in its turn helps lay bare the fraudulence of his patrons, a "ruling class" which, having allowed its people to be drawn into one needless conflict, "the Great Massacre", is now indifferent to the threatening General Strike.[55]

Only in such Frazerian terms, apparently, could Lewis begin to understand recent history and the age's failure to resist mindless, bloodthirsty and atavistic patterns of behaviour. Not only had European civilisation failed to outgrow such patterns, but they were now being actively encouraged by the importance attached to time in the philosophy and politics, science and arts prevalent among the Sitwell circle, Bloomsbury and beyond. Indeed, through his *bricolage* – to borrow a term from Claude Lévi-Strauss's *La Pensée sauvage*, the late-twentieth-century challenger to *The Golden Bough* – in his mytho-poetical borrowings from Frazer Lewis discovered a most expressive way of satirising the continuing Saturnalia of the age.

III

The foregoing analysis of Lewis's ever more comprehensive grasp of Frazerian ideas and images, and of their relevance to the modern era, suggests ways into the labyrinthine first volume of what from the start was clearly envisaged as a metaphysical epic akin to *The Divine Comedy* and its precursors – each of which attempts to anatomise its own culture.

In *The Childermass* itself a complex of names betrays a wide acquaintance with *The Golden Bough*, and in particular chapters IV and VIII of *The Scapegoat* have been exhaustively mined. Traces of the ore refined from Frazer's study of the life-and-death implications of the great seasonal festivities extend beyond Lewis's title to include tell-tales such as "The Bailiff", "Baal", "Babylon", "Herod" and the adjectival forms of "Buddha" and "Plato". Frazer's citation of the author of *The Republic* reminds us that one of the most impressive of the fables used by Plato to illustrate his political thinking is "the vision of Er". This story of a man who returns from the dead with a warning for mankind was imitated by Cicero, who reinforces his *De Re Publica* with "Scipio's dream". Upon the latter, Macrobius, the late Roman scholar, wrote a celebrated commentary. In *The Golden Bough* Frazer often alludes to this, as also to Macrobius's

Saturnalia. Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis*, moreover, is among the sources for Dante's *Divine Comedy*.[56] Yet, if the anal nature of the ways into and from Lewis's version of Limbo recalls that Satanic back passage through which Dante and Virgil escape from the Inferno, the topography of *The Childermass* (pp. 1, 7, 123–8, 134) more generally suggests a wasteland variant upon "the vision of Er". Among the marvels that Er reports is the sight of the Judges, who (in the *Gorgias*) are Minos, Rhadamanthys and Aeacus. A clue as to why in Lewis's afterworld the pagan judges are replaced not, as one might expect, by Christ or St Peter but by a puppet-like mask from Roman farce and Italian Carnival is provided by Arnold van Gennep, an associate of Frazer, and author of that ethnographical classic *The Rites of Passage* (1909). Van Gennep's title serves admirably to epitomise Plato and Cicero's "visions"; for a rite of passage is a method of travelling from one condition of life to another without losing consciousness. We tend to think of these rites as rituals celebrating the key transitions between the stages of a human lifetime: birth, puberty, marriage and death. But with much reference to *The Golden Bough* van Gennep notes, "those rites which accompany and bring about the change of the year, the season, or the month, should also be included in ceremonies of passage".[57]

To these rites that, over the millennia, have initiated people across the dangerous thresholds of the year from winter to summer, summer to winter, Lewis draws our attention through the riddling title of his own metaphysical burlesque. "The King of the Bean and the Festival of Fools" (chapter VIII, section 2, of *The Scapegoat*) discusses the commemoration at Childermass (28 December) of the slaughter of the Holy Innocents by Herod – with whom the Bailiff is compared (*Childermass*, p. 66). Childermass was widely observed in both France and England with festivities that are diminutive copies of the Festival of Fools. On Childermass Eve one of the choristers would be elected Boy Bishop. Or, in like parody of ecclesiastical ritual, the lay brothers who normally worked in the kitchen and gardens took the place of the priest, the liturgical burlesques sometimes involving a donkey's assistance at Mass. The Boy Bishop officiated in almost all the major cathedrals of medieval England, at Oxford colleges and in many parishes. In these quaint ceremonies of profanity and the overturning of rank that characterise the Twelve Days of Christmas, Frazer sees relics of an old heathen festival celebrated the world over during the perilous intercalary days which our forebears annually inserted into their calendar so as to equalise the short lunar year of twelve months with the longer solar year of approximately 365 days. In Lewis's *Childermass*, appropriately, the Bailiff

fusses over such tinkering with the Gregorian calendar and the related festivities (p. 133), for the days from Christmas to Epiphany (Saturnalia of old) are, like Carnival, periods of licence during which a mock king temporarily reigns.[58]

Cultural parody by its very nature offering a vehicle for a more trenchant critique of an age's values and beliefs, Lewis, with Frazer for his guide, ranged through past societies in search of weapons for his satire on twentieth-century stupidity and evil. And it is among European survivals of these ancient ceremonies at Christmastide that, almost certainly, Lewis found the proper rank for his "Lord of Misrule". The election of a Boy Bishop at Hereford is likely to have reminded Lewis (who bore not one but two common Welsh names!) of the custom whereby in the self-same border country, as Frazer notes, the Eve of Twelfth Night was celebrated with wassailing: on the direction in which the prize ox tossed a specially baked cake depended where the honours of the feast should go, to the mistress of the household or her husband's "bailiff".[59]

Altogether more threatening is the carnivalesque disorder implied when, around the commencement of the Bailiff's sessions, several hints are dropped as to the child-devouring cults of Thrace and Phoenicia.[60] Mock-Joycean paronomasia on Babel and Babylon (*Childermass*, pp. 136–7) assists the link between Mr Punch's entertaining way with babies, and "the Saturnalia or kindred festivals" of the New Year in Western and Central Asia. In *The Scapegoat* Frazer gives a memorable account of the New Year celebrations in Lhasa. For two brief periods the government of the Tibetan capital was taken out of the hands of the ordinary ruler and his office was put up to auction. The successful bidder assumed control as the "Jalno" and ruled in an extremely arbitrary fashion. Intriguingly, though, it was another who became the scapegoat for the sins and misfortunes of the community. This surrogate of a surrogate (whose face was "painted half-black, half white" as in the motley of the licensed fool) was grandiloquently titled "the King of the Years".[61] As such he ridiculed the Jalno, pouring scorn upon the Buddhist doctrine of Maya and upholding the reality of the physical world. This dispute clearly influenced the debates about the reality of things that are a major preoccupation of *The Childermass*, as the exchanges between the upstart Bailiff and the tatterdemalion Macrob illustrate.[62] As representative of the Grand Lama (who himself as Dalai Lama was a reincarnation of a Bodhisattva), the Jalno hotly contested "these heretical opinions", and at last the disputants agreed to decide the issue "by the cast of a dice". If the "King of the Years" won, "much evil [was] prognosticated"; but the Jalno's victory would prove that his opponent was an acceptable victim

to bear the sins of those who inhabit "the roof of the world". Good fortune was assured the citizens of Lhasa, since the dice were loaded.[63] If the New Year gambling on a chance throw is reminiscent of the Herefordshire bailiff, the rigged contest smacks of Lewis's rogue. These connections between Transhimalaya and the medieval customs of the Welsh border are brought out through Frazer's cross-cultural epithets. In chapter VIII of *The Scapegoat*, just after discussing "the King of the Bean" in a comparison of Saturnalia and Carnival, Frazer throws off a parallel with a festival in Burma which he christens "the Buddhist Lent".[64] This linkage develops the common impression of travellers from Europe that there were remarkable affinities between Roman Catholicism and Mahayana Buddhism. Frazer himself calls Lhasa "the Rome of Asia",[65] and with regard to "the King of the Years" argues that

> In the jack-pudding who now masquerades . . . in the market-place of Lhasa . . . we may fairly see . . . the vicar of a vicar . . . the tragic figure of the Pope of Buddhism . . . the man-god who bore his people's sorrows, the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.[66]

By thus calling attention to the likeness that Tibetan culture bore to medieval Christendom, Frazer would seem to have inspired the striking parallels between the Jalno ceremony and the most impressive episode in *The Childermass*: on the edge of the world, at a perilous season of change, in a rigged contest, ill-attired and mocked, a Highlander defends heterodox views against a carnivalesque and morally suspect surrogate of a surrogate, Jack-a-Lent versus Jack-a-napes.

Through such a confrontation, which fuses the burlesque traditional to the Feast of the Holy Innocents with a parody of that ultimate *rite de passage*, the Last Judgement, Lewis found an expressive method by which to view, as it were *sub specie aeternatatis*, the intellectual treason and vulgar prejudice of an age of totalitarian dictatorship, the follies and vices of a time-obsessed, philistine culture that, in its denial of both physical reality and personal identity, in its relativistic dismantling of truth, had brought about the degradation of human values in a universe suspiciously Manichean.

IV

Additional evidence that such correspondences between *The Golden Bough* and *The Childermass* have been deliberately sought by Lewis can

be found in the writer's archives now preserved by the rare-book departments of Cornell University and the State University of New York at Buffalo. Lewis's earliest worknotes are at Cornell. Among these drafts is a sizable quotation from Elliot Smith's *The Evolution of the Dragon* (1919). A formidable polymath, Elliot Smith was at once a prolific Egyptologist and a surgeon who, during the 1914–18 conflict, worked in military hospitals. Unsurprisingly, prominent among the Egyptian myths that this diffusionist was not above culling from Frazer is the story of the divine king who refused to accept ritual regicide when his power of fertility waned. Calling upon the help of the Mother Goddess, unwittingly the reluctant victim provoked the "Destruction of Mankind". This, "the most important and fundamental legend in the whole history of mythology".[67] Elliot Smith relates globally to diluvial folklore, indeed to Yima's story – a natural-enough obsession for the co-author of *Shell Shock and its Lessons* (1917). Less sizable but more frequent among the earliest drafts at Cornell are what look very like references to *The Magic Art* (II), *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild* (I) and *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*. Of these, the most interesting are Lewis's notes from (apparently) volume II of *The Magic Art*, notes which concern another upstart guardian of Hell's Gate. As Lewis had noted earlier in his review essay on Elliot Smith and the Cambridge ritualists, two-faced Janus developed from being merely a door spirit into a god. Subsequently Lewis seems to have been rather taken by the thought that the King of the Wood at Nemi originally represented not Jupiter but Janus.[68] True, in these Cornell worknotes references to the *The Scapegoat* are more oblique; even so, the shadow of this volume of *The Golden Bough* falls distinctly on *The Childermass*. It might be going too far to suggest that, by the time he composed the first volume of *The Human Age*, Lewis had been through Frazer's monumental series three times;[69] but the evidence does indicate that he had read certain volumes of the Frazer at least that often: *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (with its accounts of Mithraism and directive to Cumont), *The Dying God* and (since it is extensively quoted in *The Lion and the Fox*) *The Scapegoat*. In which case can one expect to encounter note-taking from a text so familiar? Relevant here are the *Scapegoat* reminiscences suffusing the context of Lewis's notes on Cornford's *The Origin of Attic Comedy* – a copy of which he owned.[70]

Indeed, while the focus of this essay is on Lewis's debt to Frazer, I do not wish to imply that this great scholar was the sole influence upon *The Childermass*. In several crucial ways, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* may well have led Lewis to a better model for his work in progress. Eliot of course found in *The Golden Bough* an aesthetic for the modernist poem;

for the novel, though, *Finnegans Wake* testifies that the mythical road of *Ulysses* leads to a magnificent cul-de-sac.[71] *The Scapegoat*'s power is indisputable, but "the art of story-telling" is not discoverable in *The Golden Bough* as it is in *The Arabian Nights*.[72] What Frazer offered Lewis was a pregnant situation, a rich trove of archetypes, an encyclopaedia of cross-cultural references which were to prove immensely useful in his anatomy of the twentieth century. What *The Golden Bough* did not offer Lewis was a narrative method. For such a structure Lewis, like his friend Eliot, turned to Cornford's analysis of Aristophanes, specifically to the pattern of *The Frogs*.[73] The title of the opening section of *The Childermass* and the indication of the setting are found among the earliest of Lewis's worknotes. In these preliminaries, "Prologue, Section 1" hints at the bipartite nature of Aristophanic drama, and "Outside Heaven" is somewhat reminiscent of the opening action of *The Frogs*. In both works there is an odd couple enjoying a sort of master–servant relationship: the ironical if timid Dionysius and his foolhardy slave, the intellectual Pullman and his ex-fag uneasy about unearned military honours, all making their inglorious ways through hallucinatory marshland in search of the Other World and the Judgement Seat. On arrival a typical *agon* occurs, a trial even involving torture, the proceedings being judged by a dubious substitute for Pluto. In the process the decline in the relevant culture (Athenian/modern) is exposed. Fired by Frazer's insights into the ritual origins of drama, Cornford sees illuminating connections between Aristophanes' gallery of impostors, the harlequin figures in Carnival and Saturnalia noted by Frazer, and perhaps the most familiar of all *commedia dell'arte* puppets.[74] The Punch and Judy frontispiece for Cornford's *Origin of Attic Comedy* (see figure 1) plainly helped shape both the Bailiff's seat of judgement and the peculiar nature of its occupant.

With such major themes and such dramatic antecedents in common, why then is *The Childermass* so much more difficult to grasp than Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*? A provisional answer is suggested by important clues in the later drafts and proofs of *The Childermass* preserved by the State University of New York at Buffalo. One tell-tale fact is that Lewis's manuscript additions to the galley proofs doubled the size of *The Childermass*. Since this enlargement accompanied a change in the name of the Highlander who defies the Bailiff, the new nomenclature seems significant. Douglas becomes Macrob. Since there is no such Scottish name, one is drawn to speculate whether "Macrob" might not be another invention – perhaps an abridgement. Clearly "Macrob" echoes the first syllables of the name of that late Roman authority on both the Saturnalia and "Scipio's dream". This identification of Macrob with Macrobius helps

THE ORIGIN OF ATTIC COMEDY

BY

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Μοῦσα σὺ μὲν πολέμους ἀπωσαμένη μετ' ἐμοῦ
τοῦ φίλου χόρευσον,
κλείουσα θεῶν τε γάμους ἀνδρῶν τε δαῖτας
καὶ θαλίας μακάρων·
σοὶ γὰρ τάδ' ἐξ ἀρχῆς μέλει.



LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1914

Figure 1 Title-page for Francis M. Cornford's *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (1914)

explain the former's indignation at being attired in tartan. A Hellenised Egyptian might well jib at Scottish dress.[75] Unfortunately, as a writer of philosophic dialogue Macrobius proved a bad model for Lewis's revisions, since he lacks the wit that brings Plato close to matching Aristophanes' sparkle. As for Lewis's motive for enlarging *The Childermass*, this is probably to be found in his endeavour to counter the growing provocation of Joyce's *Work in Progress* – an experiment that, as Vickery's analysis of *Finnegans Wake* suggests, also owes much to *The Golden Bough*.[76]

Whatever the full explanation for Lewis's attempt to make a comprehensive anatomy of twentieth-century culture and thus satirise its follies, the price was heavy. Over-elaboration and, especially, lapses into the imitative fallacy at times threatened to bury what has been a more dramatic structure. Fortunately D. G. Bridson was able to help the now-blind Lewis conjure up the ghost of the original lively drama in that radio dramatisation which remains one of the still largely unsung glories of the BBC Third Programme. As to Lewis's enigmatic book, the clues provided by *The Golden Bough*, valuable though they be, can take the reader only so far into the labyrinth. Like *A Tale of a Tub* or *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* – after all, both Swift and Blake are also among the guides to Lewis's deadly maze – *The Childermass* fascinates us by the way its author challenges us to explore further one of the most darkly illuminating achievements of a troubled age.[77]

NOTES

1. I am grateful to the following for the help they afforded me in my research for this essay: Robert J. Bertholf, James Tyler and their colleagues in the rare-books departments of the State University of New York at Buffalo and Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; James Dolman and Michael Wood of the Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust, which provided funds enabling me to inspect the author's papers in these American archives; Ann Quema (my postgraduate student) and David Corbett for a timely reminder concerning "The French Poodle"; and Paul Edwards, C. J. Fox and Walter Michel, who generously provided information about the extensive anthropological interests and scholarly libraries of Lewis. All references to *The Childermass* are to the first edition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928); where convenient, page references are given in the text.
2. See Peter L. Caracciolo, " 'Demavend! recalling Zendavesta': Ancient Iranian Myths in *The Human Age*" and "Mr Punch, Zoroastrianism and Relativity in *The Childermass*", *Enemy News*, no. 17 (Autumn 1982), 12–15; and no. 18 (Autumn 1983), 28–31.
3. J. G. Frazer *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, abridged edition (London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 50, referring to "Dousterswivel" (the nineteenth-century

Caledonian counterpart to the tomb-robbers of old) in *The Antiquary*. On Scott's use of biblical, literary and folkloric allusion to anatomise changes in Caledonian society see for example the Introduction to Peter L. Caracciolo (ed.) *The "Arabian Nights" in English Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 11–18.

4. J. G. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament: Studies in Compartive Religion, Legend and Law*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1918), I, 180.
5. See Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, 2nd edn of the Open Court translation (London, 1903), figs 12, 15, 25, 37, 40 and especially, 26, showing a marble bas-relief found in London. A translation of Cumont's *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* was published by Routledge (London) in 1911. Both books were reissued by Dover Publications (New York) in 1956. Robert Leach, *The Punch and Judy Show* (London: Batsford 1985), glances at this puppet's descent from Hindu idols and Loki, trickster gods with whom the Bailiff is associated. See also below, pp. 220–1, 223.
6. In Giovanni Cianci (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis Letteratura/Pittura* (Palermo: Sellerio Editore, 1982), pp. 141–57.
7. Ibid., p. 142.
8. "A Breton Journal" and "Brobdingnag", in Wyndham Lewis, *The Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1982), pp. 191–9, 291–6.
9. Ibid., p. 236. T. Sturge Moore (brother of the famous Cambridge philosopher), whose use of Frazer is noted by Vickery (pp. 144–9) and with whom Lewis became friends in the early years of the century – see Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 26–7 – may have introduced his protégé to *The Golden Bough*.
10. William Rubin (ed.), *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), I, 13–14, 38–41, 258–9.
11. "Definitely evocative of a Dionysiac mood", *Kermesse* seems to have been commissioned for Madame Strindberg's nightclub, the Cave of the Golden Calf – Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), I, 36–43. Related studies for this now-lost painting show headgear reminiscent of Breton peasant hats; see Jane Farrington, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Lund Humphries; and Manchester: City of Manchester Art Galleries, 1980), pp. 55–6.
12. "The Death of the Ankou", in Lewis, *The Complete Wild Body*, pp. 107–15. The Greek myths and rituals concerning death and resurrection are symbolised in Lewis's 1912 drawing *Eleusis: Demeter and Persephone*, reproduced in *Enemy News*, no. 22 (Spring 1986), 4 (and here as plate 1); cf. *GB 3*, VII (*Spirits of the Corn and the Wild*, I, especially pp. 59, 67–73, 90–1.
13. *GB 3*, VII, (*Balder the Beautiful*, II), 34–5 n. 1, cites an English report in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXIX (1759), 263–5. A similar question of whether the shared influence is just a matter of the *Zeitgeist* or something more arises with the conception of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1910–11). The composer confided his "vision" to one of his closest collaborators, the painter and folklorist Nicholas Roerich, who saw *The Rite of Spring* as about a sacrifice to the god Yarilo; see Eric Walker White, *Stravinsky* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 170–2. Intriguingly, chapter IV, section 8, of *The Dying God* (*GB 3*, III) focuses on the Russian spring festivities where

young maidens dance in a ring circling a solitary girl who feigns death. Lewis's watercolour *Indian Dance* (1912) "may also have been indirectly influenced by the impact of the Diaghilev Ballet" (Farrington, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 56). Ackerman (p. 183) notes early-twentieth-century Russian interest in *The Golden Bough*.

14. Although *Tarr* was completed at least before Lewis's enlistment (see Meyers, *The Enemy*, p. 78), and serialisation of the novel in *The Egoist* began in April 1916, the book was not published until June 1918. See C. J. Fox and Robert T. Chapman (eds), *Unlucky for Pringle* (London: Vision Press, 1973), p. 52.
15. Pound to Quin, 10 March 1916, in *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D. D. Paige (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 74. The affinity to totem poles of the 1921 *Abstract Figure Studies* and *Contemplator*, developed out of the 1920 *Tyros* drawings, has been noted by Jane Farrington (*Wyndham Lewis*, p. 90). Also the three abstractions (1926) and the dust-wrapper design for *Paleface* (1936) have totem-pole structures. Among the art-works produced during the gestation of *The Childermass* are those titled *Primitive Man* and *Creation Myth* (two versions). See Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), pls 84–6, 92.
16. In 1885 a Bella Coola troupe paid a year-long visit to Germany, where their carvings as well as dances had "a tremendous impact", thus inspiring Boas and the major collection of native American art in Berlin (Rubin, *"Primitivism"*, pp. 94–5). Lewis visited Germany in 1904 and 1906; earlier, while studying at the Slade (1898–1901), he was attracted to "more savage symbols on [his] way to the shrines of the cinquecento" – letter to J. T. Soby, 9 April 1947, in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W. K. Rose (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 407. British collecting dates from the late eighteenth century: see J. C. H. King, *Artificial Curiosities from the North West Coast of America . . . Collected on the Third Voyage of Captain James Cook and Acquired through Sir Joseph Banks, November 1780* (London: British Museum, 1981). Among the dramatic dance troupes that performed at the winter ceremonials during that supernatural season, nearly all these coastal peoples had dog-eater societies and – what is particularly relevant to *The Childermass* – some rites involved the kidnapping of children. Frazer utilises the evidence of such as Boas: see *GB* 3, VII, 20–1, and IX, 375–9; also Norman Bancroft, *People of the Totem Pole* (London: Orbis, 1979) pp. 103–25. See also below, note 57. In Frazerian manner too *Enemy of the Stars* (1914, rev. 1932) conflates echoes of both Christian and pagan rites of passage, seasonal as well as human – albeit that, by a further twist, Lewis often imparts to these age-old patterns something also reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe.
17. *GB* 3, IX, 127.
18. Collected in *Unlucky for Pringle*, pp. 52–9. The following quotations are taken from this edition.
19. On the links between the protagonist of "The French Poodle" and Lewis's subsequent development of the scapegoat motif, see further David M. Corbett "Fantasies of Power: An Examination of the Career and Writings of Wyndham Lewis to 1930" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester, 1987), pp. 303–6. Referring to the author of *The Golden Bough* in "Plain Home-Builder where is your Vorticist?" (1934), Lewis, significantly,

misspells J. G. Frazer's name. The error is silently corrected by Walter Michel and C. J. Fox (eds) in *Wyndham Lewis on Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), pp. 276–85.

20. See Wyndham Lewis, "How the Gunner 'Fights' ", *Blasting and Bombardiering*, 2nd, extended ed (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), pt III, ch. 3, especially p. 125.
21. See, on the clan names of the Otawa Indians, *GB 3*, VIII (*Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, II), 225 n. 1; on the martial significance, C. A. S. Williams, *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism* (1931; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1976), p. 185; and, on Christ, Harold Bayley, *The Lost Language of Symbolism* (1912; repr. London: Ernest Benn, 1974), II, 86.
22. *GB 3*, VIII, 224.
23. *GB 3*, VIII, 258 n. 2.
24. *GB 3*, IX, 209.
25. *GB 3*, IX, 172–3.
26. See "Editor's Note" by Pound on the essay's first publication in the *Little Review*, September 1917; repr. in Lewis, *The Complete Wild Body*, p. 314. See also pp. 148–54, 315–19.
27. Demonstrably Signorelli, "the man who painted Hell with such ability at Orvieto", fascinated Lewis from *Timon of Athens* through *A Battery Shelled* to *The Human Age*; see Peter L. Caracciolo, "Ezra Pound as David and Goliath", pt 1, *Enemy News*, no. 19 (Summer 1984), 18, 20 n.5.
28. Lewis, *Blasting and Bombadiering*, pt III, ch. 12, esp. p. 186. Lewis' chapter title insists that he got his "Political Education under Fire".
29. See George Holland, and Sabine and Stanley Barney Smith (eds), *Cicero: On the Commonwealth* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1929), pp. 40, 63, 97.
30. See for example Wyndham Lewis, "Shakespeare as Executioner", *The Lion and the Fox*, University paperback (London: Methuen, 1966), pt III, ch. 5.
31. Wyndham Lewis: "Books of the Quarter", *The Criterion*, III, no. 10 (January 1925), 311–15; and "The Dithyrambic Spectator", pts I and II, *Calendar of Modern Letters*, nos 1–3 (April–May 1925), 89–107, 194–213, repr. in *"The Diabolic Principle" and "The Dithyrambic Spectator"* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931), pp. 161–238 (my text here).
32. Lewis, *Blasting and Bombadiering*, p. 58.
33. Ibid., p. 85.
34. Ibid., pp. 187–8.
35. Ibid., p. 194.
36. Ibid., pp. 192–3.
37. Ibid., p. 186.
38. *The Criterion*, II, no. 6 (February 1924), 124–42, rev. for *The Apes of God* (1930). My references to *The Apes of God* are to Paul Edwards' edition (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1981). As to how Lewis's use of Aztec myth and ritual is anticipated by Grant Allen's *British Barbarians* (1895), see above, p. 56.
39. *GB 3*, VII, 12–14.
40. Lewis, *The Apes of God*, p. 333.
41. Ibid., p. 335.
42. *GB 3*, X, 15–65; cf. Lewis, *The Apes of God*, p. 334.

43. Lewis, *The Apes of God*, pp. 336, 335.
44. Ibid., p. 336.
45. Ibid., pp. 333–5.
46. *GB 3*, IX, 280–1.
47. *GB 3*, IX, 283.
48. *GB 3*, IX, 299–300.
49. *GB 3*, IX, 95.
50. Lewis, *The Apes of God*, p. 335.
51. *GB 3*, IX, 269.
52. *GB 3*, IX, 288–94.
53. Lewis, *The Apes of God*, p. 334.
54. *GB 3*, VI, 6, and IX, 341.
55. Albeit that, as Paul Edwards observes, the General Strike was "the appropriate climax to *The Apes of God* [because] a revolutionary time bomb . . . turned out to be a dud" ("Afterword" to *The Apes of God*, p. 633).
56. See *Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, tr. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 46; and Charles S. Singleton, commentary on the *Inferno*, in *The Divine Comedy*, II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 638–9.
57. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, tr. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 178.
58. *GB 3*, IX, 331–5. That Lewis well knew what "Childermass" portended in the ecclesiastical calendar is evident also from the opening of his letter to Naomi Mitchison, 28 December 1934 (*Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, p. 232), where continuing fears about the advent of a new Dark Age are jocularly expressed. See also his perceptive essays on the likes of Faulkner, Hemingway and Virginia Woolf in *Men without Art* (1934); and *Snooty Baronet* (1932), where he parodies D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), influenced by Frazer. See my "Ezra Pound as David and Goliath", *Enemy News*, no. 19, p. 20 n. 7.
59. *GB 3*, IX, 318–19.
60. Cf. *GB 3*, IX, 353–4.
61. *GB 3*, IX, 220.
62. *GB 3*, IX, 218–32.
63. While commenting on this, the "strangest" among "all the religious pantomimes" of Lhasa, in his *Tibet the Mysterious* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1906), ch. 14, Sir Thomas Holdich also remarks this trans-Himalayan scapegoat's connection with a sacrificial white dog (p. 311). See above, note 16.
64. *GB 3*, IX, 349.
65. *GB 3*, IX, 221.
66. *GB 3*, IX, 222–3.
67. Grafton Elliot Smith, *The Evolution of the Dragon* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; and London: Longman, 1919), p. 109.
68. See *GB 3*, II, 383; Lewis, *"The Diabolical Principle" and "The Dithyrambic Spectator"*, p. 206; also the Bailiff's devilish punning on Frazer and on John 14:6 in *The Childermass* draft at Cornell (these archives, like those at Buffalo, require further analysis than is possible here). A ceremony "reminiscent of the fate of the priest of Nemi" takes place in Lewis's "The Young Methuselah".

This Voltairean fiction first published in the *New Statesman*, XXII, no. 567 (1 March 1924), is reprinted in Paul Edwards' collection *Wyndham Lewis: Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), pp. 72–4. The related use that Lewis makes of Burke's *Reflections*, Carlyle's *The French Revolution* and other such texts also must await further investigation of the origins of *The Childermass*.

69. Were this the case, Lewis would not have been the first to perform such a feat: by January 1914 Morley Roberts claimed to have read three times over all that had so far been published of the Third Edition of *The Golden Bough*; see above, p. 187.
70. See Walter Michel, "Books 'from one of Lewis' Librairies' ", *Enemy News* no. 19 (Summer 1984), p. 36.
71. "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth", (*The Dial*, November 1923; repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 175–8.
72. For evidence supporting Todorov's characterisation of the *Nights* as a "narrative machine", see Caracciolo, *The "Arabian Nights" in English Literature*, pp. 79 (n. 138) and 237. Todorov's remark itself is to be found in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), p. 78. For Frazer's reference to the *Nights*, see *GB 3*, XI, 137.
73. Further parallels to Aristophanes are noted in Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 293. On Eliot's debt to Cornford, see Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 161–6.
74. F. M. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), pp. 143–8.
75. That Macrobius was a Hellenised African is suggested in *Saturnalia*, Praefatio II, see also T. R. Glover, *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1901), p. 172; Stahl, in *Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, pp. 4–5.
76. See Vickery, ch. 14, on "*Finnegans Wake* and the Rituals of Mortality". For Lewis's response to *transition*'s publication of Joyce's experiment, see Meyers, *The Enemy*, pp. 139–40; for the similar dismay felt by Joyce's erstwhile supporters, see Forrest Reed, *Pound/Joyce* (New York: New Directions, 1970), pp. 214, 223–34.
77. In a paper on *Enemy of the Stars* read at the Wyndham Lewis seminar at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, 10 March 1989, I suggested that, in addition to *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, the Prophetic Books (to which Lewis often alludes, not least in *The Childermass*) indicate another way of approaching Lewis's modernist experiments, since Blake's own exploitation of comparative mythology means that he too may be profitably regarded as a Frazerian *avant la lettre*. In his brave and valuable attempt at clarification "A Reading of *The Childermass*", in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation* (London: Athlone Press, 1980), pp. 120–32, Alan Munton has remarked the presence of Swift and Lucian. The latter, who of course acknowledged a debt to Aristophanes – see Christopher Robinson, *Lucian* (London: Duckworth, 1979), p. 9 – is in his turn used by Frazer. When I. A. Richards compares *The Childermass*, to *inter alia, The Journey from This World to the Next*, Lewis's response seems to imply that

he has not read any of Fielding's Lucianic satires; see "A Talk on *The Childermass*", *Agenda*, 7, no. 3 – 8, no. 1 (Autumn–Winter 1969–70), p. 16 (in vol. 7); *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis* p. 547). Lewis's answer looks suspiciously disingenuous, for there are remarkable parallels between his parody and another of Fielding's satires, *The Author's Farce* – a theatrical burlesque echoing *The Dunciad* – where, in the course of Act III, an inset puppet play uses Punch and Judy to introduce a scene in Hell. See *The Complete Works of Henry Fielding: Poems and Plays*, ed. W. H. Henley (London: William Heinemann, 1903), I, 228–30.

XII

"A HEALED WHOLE MAN": FRAZER, LAWRENCE AND BLOOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

Phillip L. Marcus

WE do not know precisely when D. H. Lawrence first read Frazer. John B. Vickery, in the standard study of Frazer's impact, suggests that it may have been as early as 1911.[1] What we can say more confidently is that Lawrence's initial interest in Frazer was part of a broader interest in his part in anthropological and "occult" studies, and that this interest predated the First World War I but was intensified by the war itself.[2] We know, of course, that virtually all of the great modernist writers found the war profoundly traumatic, a violent shaking of their faith in whatever values – religious, social, artistic – they had held most dear; and that none of them felt the shock more intensely than Lawrence. At such a moment of crisis, it was natural for these figures to turn to any system of thought that seemed to offer some sort of stay against chaos, to give what Eliot called "shape and significance" to "the immense panorama of anarchy and futility that is contemporary history".[3] A study such as *The Golden Bough* was likely to be particularly appealing at such a moment: its principle of organisation suggested that the apparent confusion of human experience and history revealed a universal pattern; and that pattern itself implied certain highly positive values upon which *some* faith could be (re)constructed. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that Lawrence's first certain reference to Frazer came in 1915, in the course of his vigorous efforts to incorporate Bertrand Russel into some of his programmes for the transformation of a society plunged into an abyss of cataclysmic destruction.

In this essay I propose to supplement Vickery's work by looking more closely than he does at that 1915 letter (addressed to Russell himself) and the context for it provided by certain fictional texts; in doing so I shall hope to throw light on Lawrence's reasons for invoking Frazer and to trace some ways in which Frazer's thought became inextricably interwoven with Lawrence's own vision.

I

The letter to Russell, dated 8 December 1915, must be quoted in full:

I called to see you yesterday but you were out. I hope you will come up and see us soon. – No definite development in our plans.

I have been reading Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy*. Now I am convinced of what I believed when I was about twenty – that there is another seat of consciousness than the brain and the nerve system: there is a blood-consciousness which exists in us independently of the ordinary mental consciousness, which depends on the eye as its source or connector. There is the blood-consciousness, with the sexual connection, holding the same relation as the eye, in seeing, holds to the mental consciousness. One lives, knows, and has one's being in the blood, without any reference to nerves and brain. This is one half of life, belonging to the darkness. And the tragedy of this our life, and of your life, is that the mental and nerve consciousness exerts a tyranny over the blood-consciousness, and that your will has gone completely over to the mental consciousness, and is engaged in the destruction of your blood-being or blood-consciousness, the final liberating of the one, which is only death in result. Plato was the same. Now it is necessary for us to realise that there is this other great half of our life active in the darkness, the blood-relationship: that when I *see*, there is a connection between my mental consciousness and an outside body, forming a percept; but at the same time, there is a transmission through the darkness which is never absent from the light, into my blood-consciousness: but in seeing, the blood-percept is perhaps not strong. On the other hand, when I take a woman, then the blood-percept is supreme, my blood-knowing is overwhelming. There is a transmission, I don't know of what, between her blood and mine, in the act of connection. So that afterwards, even if she goes away, the blood-consciousness persists between us, when the mental consciousness is suspended; and I am formed then by my blood-consciousness, not by my mind or nerves at all.

Similarly in the transmission from the blood of the mother to the embryo in the womb, there goes the whole *blood* consciousness. And when they say a mental image is sometimes transmitted from the mother to the embryo, this is not the *mental* image, but the *blood-image*. All living things, even plants, have a blood-being. If a lizard falls on the breast of a pregnant woman, then the blood-being of the lizard passes with a shock into the blood-being of the woman, and is

transferred to the foetus, probably without intervention either of nerve or brain consciousness. And this is the origin of totem: and for this reason some tribes no doubt really *were* kangaroos: they contained the blood-knowledge of the kangaroo. – And blood knowledge comes either through the mother or through the sex – so that dreams at puberty are as good an origin of the totem as the percept of a pregnant woman.

This is very important to our living, that we should realise that we have a blood-being, a blood-consciousness, a blood-soul, complete and apart from the mental and nerve consciousness.

Do you know what science says about these things? It is *very* important: the whole of our future life depends on it.[4]

Although the magisterial Third Edition of *The Golden Bough* had only recently been published in its entirety, its appearance might not have been what brought Frazer to Lawrence's attention, and even if it was we cannot be sure that it was that edition that he actually used; in fact, in the one instance in which he actually quoted from the book, the passage he chose appears verbatim only in the three-volume Second Edition of 1900.[5] However, most if not all of what really mattered to him in Frazer was common to all three versions. The first point to notice about the reference here is that Lawrence was citing Frazer as an authority primarily on what must be called a matter of *psychology*. According to the model Lawrence offers, human beings have – or should have – both "mental" and "blood" sides to their psyches. With the "mental" pole Lawrence associates specifically light and the eye, the corresponding "blood" terms being darkness and "the sexual connection". His statement "there is a transmission, I don't know of what" suggests that the "blood" realm, not directly knowable by mental inquiry, corresponds to the unconscious ("dreams of puberty" may reinforce this connection); and the references to pregnant woman, embryo, and totem link the "blood" to non-verbal communication and to animals.

As no one would have to be "convinced" that we have a mental consciousness, it is obvious that what Frazer gave Lawrence scholarly or scientific confirmation of was the existence of "*another* seat of consciousness". Its existence had not, of course, been what Frazer himself had been concerned to prove. What Lawrence was responding to is suggested by a passage from an early version of one of the studies of American literature:

> The primary or sensual mind of man expresses itself most profoundly in myth. At the same time, myth is most repugnant to reason. Myth is the huge, concrete expression wherein the dynamic psyche utters its first great passional concepts of the genesis of the human cosmos, the inception of the human species.[6]

In the early peoples to whom Frazer devotes so much attention, and in those myths by which they lived, the "blood" side was pre-eminent; the mental, rudimentary at best. It follows, then, that there is a historical dimension to the opposition, though, as Frazer illustrated so abundantly, within our own era the past "survives" not only in vestigial rites and customs the original meaning of which has been forgotten, but also in less civilised societies, so that, for example, "homoeopathic magic", practised "thousands of years ago" by "the sorcerers of ancient India, Babylon, and Egypt . . . at this very day . . . is still resorted to by cunning and malignant savages in Australia, Africa, and Scotland".[7]

Arranged in columnar fashion, the pattern of antinomies expressed or implied in the letter might look like this:

mental	blood
eye	sexual connection
light	darkness
conscious	unconscious
language	non-verbal communication
reason	other ways of knowing
human	animal
modern	ancient
civilised	primitive

If this arrangement seems over-schematised, we may note that Lawrence himself twice mentions that each pole is "*half* of life".

II

Lawrence describes the significance of his reading of Frazer with a distinction corresponding to one of his pairs of opposites: he had "believed" in that other seat of consciousness (suggesting not only an article of faith but also something known without proof) for ten years; *now* he had the mental-conscious *evidence* of a scientific study. How

precise Lawrence meant to be in his dating is uncertain, but there is no doubt that he *had* been exploring the question well before 1915, the origins of his concern lying not in a book but rather in his own psyche and in his early experiences. *Sons and Lovers* offers a dramatic example, with Miriam and Clara embodying the antinomies and Paul's inability to sustain a viable relationship with either of them arguably explicable not only as the result of his Oedipal attachment to his mother but also – in the terms of the 1915 letter – as the inevitable failure of any attempt to live, in effect, with only half of one's being.

A letter Lawrence wrote in 1913 employs the same categories, with a stress on the "blood" side that anticipates the letter to Russell: "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. . . . We have got so ridiculously mindful, that we never know that we ourselves are anything."[8] The use of "believed" in 1915 makes the link quite precise, and the generalising assertion of the last sentence quoted anticipates the cultural critique Lawrence would add to his personal criticism.

An even more striking fictional embodiment of the question in the years before the reference to Frazer is the story "The Prussian Officer" ("Honour and Arms"), written in 1913.[9] The relationship of officer and orderly may have suggestive implications about militarism or homoeroticism, or both; but the two characters seem primarily to represent with an almost allegorical obviousness the chief features of the "mind" and the "blood", respectively. The officer, with "light blue eyes that were always flashing with cold fire", with "fine hands and cultivated movements", is associated with aristocracy, social sophistication, self-control and discipline. He dominates the horses he rides and the men he commands, but his efforts with women always fail and leave "his brow still more tense, his eyes still more hostile and irritable" (p. 2). The orderly is his opposite in every way. He is "warm" and "young" and has the "strong heavy limbs" of a peasant, and "dark, expressionless eyes, that seemed never to have thought, only to have received life direct through his senses, and acted straight from instinct" (pp. 2–3). A "vigorous, unconscious presence", he moves with "the blind, instinctive sureness of movement of a young animal" and a freedom "which no military discipline could make stiff" (pp. 3, 5). Unlike the captain, he has a successful romantic relationship, with a "girl from the mountains, independent and primitive". Significantly, words play no real role in the relationship: "The two walked together, rather silently. He went with her, not to talk, but to have his arm round her, and for the physical contact. . . . And she, in

some unspoken fashion, was there for him" (p. 5). (For her birthday card he can only laboriously *copy* some verses.)

Each man senses a connection with the other, a fact that points towards their being aspects of the same psyche. More exactly, the orderly represents that side of the psyche that has been denied. Thus the officer "was a man of passionate temper, who had always kept himself suppressed" (p. 4). The orderly's presence "was like a warm flame upon the older man's tense, rigid body, that had become almost unliving, fixed" (p. 3). The officer "did not choose to be touched into life by his servant"; he "was not going to allow such a thing as the stirring of his innate self" (pp. 3–4).

The dynamics of their relationship can be glossed by the 1915 letter to Russell: "the mental and nerve consciousness exerts a tyranny over the blood-consciousness, and ... your will ... is engaged in the destruction of your blood-being or blood-consciousness, the final liberating of the one, which is only death in result". Instead of a healthy balance, we see repression, violence (the captain's physical abuse of the orderly), and then psychic disintegration: the captain experiences "a horrible breaking down of something inside him" (p. 8). The two sides become irreconcilably at odds, so that it seems either can survive only through the denial of the other:

> The officer, pale and heavy, sat at the table. The orderly, as he saluted, felt himself put out of existence. He stood still for a moment submitting to his own nullification – then he gathered himself, seemed to regain himself, and then the captain began to grow vague, unreal, and the younger soldier's heart beat up. He clung to this sensation – that the captain did not exist, so that he himself might live. But when he saw his officer's hand tremble as he took the coffee, he felt everything falling shattered. And he went away, feeling as if he himself were coming to pieces, disintegrated. (p. 10)

As the officer denies his "blood", so the orderly "wanted to stay in shadow, not to be forced into consciousness" (p. 11). But in killing the captain, whose blood symbolically runs to his eyes, the orderly wins only a pyrrhic victory, for "the final liberating of the one", Lawrence would write to Russell, "is only death in result". Thus "here his own life also ended" (p. 15). He falls, through "lack of balance"; he loses all ability to communicate, so that when he meets a woman in a field "he had no language with which to speak to her"; he hallucinates "something with great eyes that stared round a tree" (p. 20); between lapses into

unconsciousness, into "the pure darkness" (p. 19), he becomes totally dissociated, "divided among all kinds of separate beings"; then "his eyes went black" (p. 20) and, ironically, he and the captain are united in death, laid side by side in the mortuary.

The final struggle between the two men takes place in a wood, which Professor Vickery has suggestively equated with the sacred grove at Nemi.[10] The emphasis upon the captain's age and sterility and the orderly's youth and sensual vitality allows us to see also a more specific parallel with the failing priest–king and his successor. But the effect of the parallels is one of ironic contrast: here, surely, there is no renewal of fertility or the psychic equivalent, the achievement of wholeness or integration. In the story those values are represented symbolically by the mountains. In the opening paragraph we see the troops marching towards them, "*between* the rye-fields and the meadows, *between* the scraggy fruit-trees set regularly on either side of the highroad" (p. 1; emphasis added). The reiterated emphasis on sides and betweenness, as well as the dual nature of the mountains, "half earth, half heaven" (p. 1), suggests the proper combination Lawrence would stress in the letter ("one half of life . . . this other great half of our life"); and at the end of the story the orderly's final dim vision is of the mountains, which, "as they stood in their beauty, . . . seemed to have it, that which was lost in him" (p. 20).[11]

The story itself thus helps us articulate something only implied in the letter: a destructive relationship between "mental" and "blood" consciousnesses would correspond to the sterile, wasteland condition that in the archetypal world of *The Golden Bough* necessitates sacrifice. Although the fact that both characters are male could be a reflection of their roles as aspects of a single psyche, Lawrence's complex, ambiguous attitude towards love between men makes it tempting to see the destructive nature of the relationships as connected with homoeroticism. In any case, the story suggests by contrast that the metaphoric priest–king's fertility depends upon his psychic integration, without which he can never participate in fructifying union with the "mother goddess". The woman, "full-skirted, a black cloth on her head for head dress", who passes "through the glistering green corn, into the full glare" while the orderly, unable to speak to her, "stood against a tree" (p. 19) may be that goddess herself.

III

The closeness of such correspondences naturally sends us back to the question of whether Lawrence had read Frazer by the time he wrote "The Prussian Officer", and well before referring to him in the letter to Russell. Such is certainly possible. Lawrence's "I have been reading . . ." *could* refer to an extended period. It is perfectly clear, however, that Lawrence himself meant to emphasise the *recent* impact of the books – "Now I am convinced . . ." – and in doing so had in mind the effect of the reference on Russell. Earlier in 1915, on 14 September, Lawrence had written to Russell that "you are simply *full* of repressed desires, which have become savage and anti-social. . . .//You are too full of devilish repressions to be anything but lustful and cruel. I would rather have the German soldiers with rapine and cruelty, than you with your words of goodness." This was to put Russell in the role of the Prussian officer, and Lawrence, as the "victim" of his cruelty, in that of the orderly. Lawrence's anger was intense, and he went on to suggest ending the relationship: "it is *not* the hatred of falsehood which inspires you. It is the hatred of people, of flesh and blood. It is a perverted, mental blood-lust. Why don't you own it.//Let us become strangers again, I think it is better."[12] Lawrence was soon attempting to patch things up, confessing that "my quarrelling with you was largely a quarrelling with something in *myself*, something I was struggling away from in myself".[13] But, despite the self-awareness he showed here, he continued to objectify some of his inner division in controversy with Russell.

It is in this context, I believe, that the reference to Frazer in the letter of 8 December 1915 must be seen. Frazer not only offers an empowering confirmation of Lawrence's own long-held belief, but also provides scholarly support for his personal criticism of Russell for having a "perverted, mental blood-lust". In the later letter he returns to this accusation, saying that "the tragedy of this our life, and of *your* life, is that the mental and nerve consciousness exerts a tyranny over the blood-consciousness" (emphasis added). His concluding question, "Do you know what science says about these things?" should perhaps be read with stress on the "you"; with fine irony, Lawrence was quoting Frazer, a scholar and scientist like Russell and even, like him, a Trinity, Cambridge man.[14] So, although we cannot be sure that "The Prussian Officer" reveals the direct impact of Frazer, the Frazer reference in the letter establishes a link between Russell and the story; three years later

Lawrence established further connections among all these elements, rewriting "The Prussian Officer" in a new story, "The Blind Man", which, incorporating as it does a character clearly based in part on Russell, can be seen also as a fictional dramatisation of the epistolary attacks of 1915.

Although Bertie Reid may be based partly on J. M. Barrie, and of course partly on an aspect of Lawrence himself, he corresponds closely to Bertie Russell as he appears in Lawrence's letter, the epitome of the mental consciousness.[15] He has "a very big forehead", and "large eyes", with "thin white fingers", a small body, and short legs (pp. 66–7); he is a Scotsman "of the intellectual type", a "man of letters" (p. 57).[16] Like the officer, he "could not approach women physically. He wanted to do so. But he could not" (p. 69).[17] And "At the centre of him he was afraid, helplessly and even brutally afraid" (p. 69). The word "brutally" (linked rather surprisingly with "afraid") recalls not only the officer but also Lawrence's assertion of Russell's "cruelty".

Maurice is "just the opposite to Bertie" (p. 57). Like the orderly, "his mind was slow, as if drugged by the strong provincial blood that beat in his veins" (p. 57). Physically Bertie's antitype, he has *no* eyes, "his head was small", but he has "heavy limbs, powerful legs that seemed to know the earth". His hands are "large, reddish, intelligent", his "face and neck surcharged with blood" (p. 63). He moves about "almost unconsciously", thinking little, in a "sheer immediacy of blood-contact with the substantial world" (p. 64). A "tower of darkness", he prefers to the house the "animal grossness of the back", where he performs menial tasks or stands in the dark communicating almost wordlessly with the horses (pp. 63–4).

The associations of the two men with antithetical ways of knowing are dramatised in the conversation after the meal, in which Bertie says, "it always seems to me that when there is no thought and no action, there is nothing", and Maurice, echoing the "I don't know what" of Lawrence's letter, replies that "There is something. . . . I couldn't tell you what it is" (pp. 69–70). Both men, because of their incompleteness, are sometimes desperately unhappy, Bertie feeling himself "neuter, nothing", and Maurice experiencing "devastating fits of depression, which seemed to lay waste his whole being" (p. 56), a "chaos inside himself, when he seemed merely at the mercy of his own powerful and conflicting elements" (pp. 64–5).

Coming to the story from "The Prussian Officer", we are not surprised to find that "from the first the two men did not like each other"; nor are we surprised that Isabel should feel "they *ought* to get on together. . . . She felt that if only each could have the clue to the other there would be such a rare understanding between them" (p. 57). Russell and

Lawrence had been introduced by Lady Ottoline Morrell; as Russell later recalled, she "admired us and made us think that we should admire each other". *Their* dislike was not instant, though some tension and suspicion seem to have been present almost from the first. (It was Russell who was sexually intimate with Lady Ottoline, while she and Lawrence engaged in what Frieda jealously termed "soul mush"; but in *Women in Love* Lawrence indicated a physical affair between his fictional incarnation and Lady Ottoline's.[18])

The climactic encounter of Maurice and Bertie, though it takes place in the transitional territory of "a sort of intermediate barn" (p. 71) rather than in a wood or grove, replicates the destructive final meeting of officer and orderly. The homoerotic element is there, more overtly than in the earlier story, for Maurice feels towards Bertie "hot, poignant love, the passion of friendship" (p. 74). But it is "this very passion of friendship which Bertie shrank from most" (p. 74). Putting Bertie's hand over his disfigured eye-sockets, Maurice forces him to experience the "blood" as Lawrence had done to Russell by writing so insistently of it in the letter.

At a psychological level, Isabel has symbolic associations comparable to those of the mountains in "The Prussian Officer". As signalled by her ability to relate comfortably to both Maurice and Bertie, she represents an individual in whom "mind" and "blood" are both active. So she writes book reviews and carries on intellectual discussions with Bertie, but she also understands Maurice's blood-world and recognises that "there is something else, something *there*, which you never knew was there, and which you can't express" (p. 70). When Bertie says, "I suppose we're all deficient somewhere", she demurs: "I don't know, . . . I feel quite all right, you know. The child coming seems to make me indifferent to everything, just placid. . . . // I suppose it's just Nature. If only I felt I needn't trouble about Maurice, I should be perfectly content –" (pp. 70–1). The references to her pregnancy and to Nature suggest that, at the level of the Frazerian paradigm of fertility rituals, she inherits the role of the farm woman glimpsed briefly among the corn by the dying orderly. The fact that Maurice has in fact twice impregnated her warns us not to press the analogy too hard; but the death of the first child, as an infant, "when her husband first went out to France" (p. 56) fits naturally into the archetypal pattern. The agency of the war in pushing Maurice further towards the deadliness of total blood-consciousness also brings out the connection implied in the letter of 8 December 1915 between the current conflict in the polity and a destructive psychomachia like that dramatised in the story. Even Bertie shares with the mother goddess a memory of flowers, "the violets under Aunt Bell's south wall" (p. 67). But Isabel's

effort to bring her two partial males together seems doomed to failure. Lawrence wrote the story in November 1918 and the events themselves take place in November; the temporal link with the Armistice suggests that a mere cessation of hostilities might represent death rather than peace, and that more would be required to bring the earth to life again.

IV

In other stories of this same period, we find variations upon the pattern formed by the cluster of associated elements we have been exploring. In "Tickets, Please", for example, John Thomas, whose name suggests that he is a walking symbol of the "blood" (at least as manifested in "the sexual connection"), resists Annie's efforts to "take an intelligent interest in him, and to have an intelligent response" as well as a sexual one (p. 46). Although she seems balanced, he does not: he "intended to remain a nocturnal presence; he had no idea of becoming an all-round individual to her. . . . He hated intelligent interest" (p. 46). The connection with the war reappears. The story, like "The Blind Man", dates from November 1918. Not only does the healthy and virile John Thomas stand out on the home front among the "men unfit for active service: cripples and hunchbacks" (p. 41), but the tram-girls' vindictive attack on him occurs in a waiting-room outside which "was the darkness and lawlessness of wartime" (p. 48). In the attack itself the tram-girls become Maenads: "Their blood was now thoroughly up. . . . Strange, wild creatures, they hung on him and rushed at him to bear him down" (p. 51). His tunic is ripped apart, as if he were a victim of the votaries of the sacrificed god Dionysos: but his "triumph" comes *at the expense* of the mother goddess, and though "he picked up the torn pieces" he did so "without knowing what to do with them" (p. 53). At neither psychological nor mythic levels does there seem any promise of rebirth.

A similar pessimism is implied in "Monkey Nuts", written in 1919, though in this story some of the familiar components are put together in still different ways. The ages of the central characters are almost identical with those in "The Prussian Officer", Albert and the officer both being "about forty" while Joe is twenty-three and the orderly "about twenty-two" (pp. 76, 2); Albert is also more verbal and higher in rank than Joe; but in this case the younger man, though not as comfortable with words, is "of a slightly better class" and "never thought of Albert as a master" (p. 76). In fact, their male bonding at the beginning of the story takes place in an Edenic setting: "a green smooth field . . . flowering apple

trees. The weather being sunny, work being easy, Albert, a real good pal, what life could be better! After Flanders, it was heaven itself" (p. 76). Given this atmosphere, Miss Stokes might seem to combine the roles of serpent and *femme fatale*, and, like "Tickets, Please", the story has been interpreted along those lines, as a cautionary fable against allowing women to step into male roles.[19] From our perspective, however, such associations miss the mark. Bantering with Albert even as she uses her "silent forces" to attract Joe, Miss Stokes seems to have the same sort of balanced psyche as Isabel and Annie; and her role as a land-girl links her to the mother goddess. But it is her appeal to Joe's "blood" side that is most significant. She watches Joe "from below" and seduces him in the darkness, in "a belt of dark pine-wood" (pp. 78, 83). Joe, however, is only half-willing, his conscious being remaining faithful to Albert, who appeals primarily to his "mental" side. Thus, when Albert confronts him on his return from one of his meetings with her, Joe, "as one rousing from a spell", barks, "I don't want 'er", but when asked by Albert "What do you go for, boy?" can only remain silent (p. 86): there *are* no words to express the pull of the "blood". Although Albert himself feigns a sexual interest in Miss Stokes, his verbal flirtatiousness masks a deadly antagonism; and, in the scene in which he cruelly offers himself in Joe's place, his genuine bewilderment at her tears emblematises the epistemological antithesis they represent.

Joe's statement that "there'll be murder done one of these days" (p. 86) points toward the destructive effects that result when the one consciousness tyrannises over the other. In the climactic confrontation Joe chooses Albert and the tranquillity of the story's opening paragraph is apparently restored:

> They were reassured, however, when they found that Miss Stokes came no more with the hay. As far as they were concerned, she had vanished into oblivion. And Joe felt more relieved even than he had felt when he heard the firing cease, after the news had come that the armistice was signed. (p. 90)

But Joe has in effect denied half of his own being, and thus seems destined to meet, psychologically, the death he had escaped in Flanders. The goddess will have no fit mate, and the war-torn wasteland remains.

V

Women in Love, on which Lawrence had been at work throughout the period we have been considering, is, as we might expect, pervaded by elements involving Russell, Frazer and the mind–blood dichotomy. Although Russell himself appears as a thinly veiled caricature in the figure of Sir Joshua Malleson, "always with a strong mentality working" (p. 98),[20] the really significant resonance lies much deeper, in the major characters and their relationships and in the vision that informs the fabric of the novel itself. When Birkin attacks Hermione in the "Class-room" chapter, his terms echo Lawrence's attacks on Russell in the 1915 correspondence:

> But your passion is a lie. . . . It isn't passion at all, it is your *will*. It's your bullying will. You want to clutch things and have them in your power. You want to have things in your power. And why? Because you haven't got any real body, any dark sensual body of life. You have no sensuality. You have only your will and your conceit of consciousness, and your lust for power to *know*. (p. 42)

Hermione, like Bertie Reid, cannot comprehend: "How can you have knowledge not in your head?" "In the blood," is Birkin's answer, "when the mind and the known world is drowned in darkness" (p. 43). Assaulting him with the paperweight, she acts out the destructive violence that Lawrence had warned Russell must inevitably accompany such onesidedness.

The discarded "Prologue" throws further light on Lawrence's perception of such problems. Because of Hermione's extreme imbalance, she offers Birkin no sensual satisfaction, producing a painful split within him:

> he wanted to keep his integrity of being, he would not consent to sacrifice one half of himself to the other. He would not sacrifice the sensual to the spiritual half of himself, and he could not sacrifice the spiritual to the sensual half. Neither could he obtain fulfilment in both, the two halves always reacted from each other. To be spiritual, he must have a Hermione, completely without desire: to be sensual, he must have a slightly bestial woman. (pp. 499–500)

It is perhaps not too far-fetched to see the repeated "sacrifice" as suggestive of *The Golden Bough*. In any case, Birkin, like the orderly,

> was on the point either of breaking, becoming a thing, losing his integral being, or else of becoming insane. He was now nothing but a series of reactions from dark to light, from light to dark, almost mechanical, without unity or meaning. . . . He knew that in the end, . . . he would be shattered, would die, or else, worse still, would become a mere disordered set of processes, without purpose or integral being. (p. 500)

But he still had hope: "To save himself, he must unite the two halves of himself, spiritual and sensual. . . . His fundamental desire was, to be able to love completely, in one and the same act: both body and soul at once, struck into a complete oneness in contact with a complete woman" (pp. 500–1).

Enter Ursula. Early in their relationship he identified her overtly – but very negatively – with the mother goddess. The very thought of the archetype revolts him:

> But it seemed to him, woman was always so horrible and clutching, she had such a lust for possession, a greed of self-importance in love. She wanted to have, to own, to control, to be dominant. Everything must be referred back to her, to Woman, the Great Mother of everything, out of whom proceeded everything and to whom everything must finally be rendered up. . . . She was on a very high horse again, was woman, the Great Mother. (p. 200)

Birkin's negative attitude may reflect Lawrence's own discomfort at the new freedom and power that the war seemed to have made available to women; the strength of Lawrence's feelings on the subject is suggested by a contemporary essay in which he asserted that "a race falls when men begin to worship the Great Mother".[21] A letter of 1918 shows that Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* provided the terms in which Lawrence described his own almost obsessive fascination with the "devouring mother".[22] Jung's thought also offered remarkable congruences with Frazer: it involved an encounter between the conscious self and its unconscious opposite, and its paradigmatic scenario of a death-like descent into that dark realm as essential prelude to psychological or spiritual "rebirth" and development of an integrated personality paralleled the archetypal patterns of the fertility rituals. The work of both men helped shape the course of Birkin's development.

If the ideal inner psychic state involves a balance of opposites, a relationship with another being must not threaten that balance: there

must be no possessive demands upon the other. Thus Birkin's famous formulation of star-equilibrium, a "conjunction where man had being and woman had being, two pure beings, each constituting the freedom of the other, balancing each other like two poles of one force, like two angels, or two demons" (pp. 148, 199). This "love-ethic" represents an interpersonal version of the model Lawrence had described to Russell. It is what Birkin perceives as Ursula's possessiveness and desire for dominance that makes her threatening to him. He fears she would leave him with the same "fatal halfness" that Hermione had led him towards and that he now detects in Gerald, "as if he were limited to one form of existence, one knowledge, one activity" (p. 206).

These concerns lie at the heart of the intensely Frazerian scene in "Moony" in which Ursula comes upon Birkin by the edge of the pond, throwing flowers into the water while saying "Cybele – curse her! The accursed Syria Dea!" (p. 246). According to Frazer, flowers were thrown in this way as a substitute for human sacrifice.[23] He then tries, and inevitably fails, to destroy the image of the "white goddess" by throwing stones at the reflection on the water. As Ursula is the human embodiment of the archetype, Birkin's encounter with her that night is pervaded by tension. But the next day his thoughts turn to the African statuette, an image that might almost have stepped from the pages of *The Golden Bough* and one symbolic in his eyes of pure blood-consciousness:

> she had thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her. It must have been thousands of years since her race had died, mystically: that is, since the relation between the senses and the outspoken mind had broken, leaving the experience all in one sort, mystically sensual. . . . leaving the single impulse for knowledge in one sort, mindless progressive knowledge through the senses, knowledge arrested and ending in the senses, mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution. (p. 253)

A frightening image of the state awaiting those who "lapse from pure integral being" (the same phrase used in the "Prologue"), the statuette is counterpointed by Birkin with Gerald, whose halfness and "northern" whiteness seem to make him a symbol of the opposite extreme, of "a mystery of ice-destructive knowledge, snow-abstract annihilation" (p. 254). With frightened urgency he seeks to escape from the threat of the destructive extremes by finding with Ursula a "Paradisal" balanced relationship (p. 254). She seems to be won over to his philosophy, and in "Excurse" they at least temporarily establish such a relationship.

Significantly, they consummate it in Sherwood Forest – the sacred grove.

But, as all readers of the novel know, the further course of things between them does not run smooth. The problem may well lie in Birkin's desire for a relationship with Gerald, a desire that in the "Prologue" was resisted by him and *opposed* to the achievement of a viable relationship with a woman: "He wanted all the time to love women. He wanted all the while to feel this kindled, loving attraction towards a beautiful woman, that he would often feel towards a handsome man. But he could not" (p. 502). Arguably the end of the novel represents a final collapse of this effort, a return to the state in which Birkin had found himself before the action of the novel as we now have it begins. In any event, the homoeroticism involved establishes a further link between the congeries of Frazerian elements in the novel and stories such as "The Prussian Officer", "The Blind Man" and "Monkey Nuts".

VI

Women in Love reflects a broad, pessimistic social vision. Such a vision predictably stimulated thoughts of flight. As Lawrence wrote in 1919,

> Now, after two thousand years of effort, we have so subjected the centres of sensual cognition that they depend automatically upon the upper centres. Now, after two thousand years, having established our knowledge and even our experience all in one sort, a halfness, we find ourselves in a prison. . . . What lies before us is either escape or death.[24]

As Lawrence moved through a series of foreign countries in a desperate search for a "world elsewhere" and found that the problem was inescapable, the paradigms we have been exploring underwent yet further metamorphoses. A striking instance is the essay on Benjamin Franklin in *Studies in Classic American Literature*. There Franklin himself is cast in the role of Russell. Both men were multi-talented geniuses: as Lawrence, tongue obviously in cheek, described the American, "printer, philosopher, scientist, author and patriot, impeccable husband and citizen, why isn't he an archetype?" (p. 24).[25] (Some of the resonances here would fit Russell quite ironically.) The charge against each man is the same – denial of the "blood":

> The *wholeness* of a man is his soul. Not merely that nice little comfortable bit which Benjamin marks out.
>
> It's a queer thing is a man's soul. It is the whole of him. Which means it is the unknown him, as well as the known. It seems to me just funny, professors and Benjamins fixing the functions of the soul. (pp. 20–1)

Franklin, of course, was *not* a "professor". "Is Yale College going to educate the self that is in the dark of you, or Harvard College?" (p. 19) Or even Cambridge? "The soul of man is a dark forest", though Franklin tried to reduce it to "a neat back garden". Although Lawrence mentions specifically "the Hercynian Wood that scared the Romans so", the essay goes on to suggest a connection with the American wilderness and its original inhabitants, and we might recognise also Frazer's sacred wood and the primitive peoples among whom he detected so many vestigial survivals of the ancient rites (p. 21). The "extirpation" of "these savages", in which Franklin seems so complacently to acquiesce, is one more version of the triumph of the mind consciousness over its dark counterpart (p. 25). As in Frazer, the woods are full of "gods, strange gods" (p. 26). Recognition of these mysterious impulses becomes linked for Lawrence with an anti-democratic social order: "Know that you are responsible to the gods inside you and to the men in whom the gods are manifest. Recognize your superiors and inferiors, according to the gods" (p. 27). In 1915 Lawrence had advised Russell, "You must drop all your democracy. . . .//There must be an aristocracy of people who have wisdom."[26] The portrait of Franklin, "this dry, moral, utilitarian little democrat", makes the same strident point.

If *escape* seemed in fact impossible, there might yet be hope in the prospect of a new *era*. In the letter of 8 December 1915 Lawrence had referred to "the tragedy of this our life" and asserted that "the whole of our future life" depended upon recognition of the "blood". In criticising Russell for having allowed his mental consciousness to destroy its opposite, Lawrence had added, "Plato was the same", thus giving the problem an important historical perspective. Although Lawrence does not mention here the most profoundly influential figure of the period *between* Plato and Russell, he made it abundantly clear elsewhere that he saw Christ, too, as an avatar of the same destructively one-sided system of values:

> But the era of Christianity is the era in which the rational or upper or spiritual mind has risen superior to the primary or sensual being. It is

> the era, when, in the white race particularly, spirit has triumphed over flesh, mind over matter. The great triumph of the one half over the other is effected.[27]

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Connie makes the connection overt, stating of the human body that "Plato and Aristotle killed it, and Jesus finished it off."[28] But by the twentieth century Christianity had become, in Lawrence's eyes, "the has-been" and he was confident that "there must be something new" to replace our "Christian-democratic epoch".[29] Lawrence's expectation parallels Frazer's treatment of Christ as simply one more in an ongoing series of sacrificed fertility gods. A Jungian perspective on this archetypal pattern throws further light on Lawrence's position. In Emma Jung's book on the Grail legends she wrote of how her husband

> has shown that this mystery of the killing and renewal of the King also persisted as a symbolic conception in Alchemy, which indicates the great and universal significance of this idea. . . . He has also explained that the image of God prevailing in the collective unconscious requires renewal from time to time, because the dominant attitude of consciousness is only "right" when it accords with the claims of both consciousness *and* the unconscious. Only then can it combine their opposing tendencies into unity. If, on the other hand, the ruling attitude is either too weak or incomplete, then "life is consumed in unfruitful conflict". But if the old attitude of consciousness is renewed through its descent into the unconscious, then from the latter there emerges a new symbol of wholeness which is as son to the old king.[30]

It is in such a manner, I would suggest, that Lawrence envisioned the recognition of the "blood" affecting the shape of the future. In *The Escaped Cock* he would attempt to hasten that recognition by rewriting the Gospels in the light of *The Golden Bough*.

During the 1920s, what Eliot called the "mythical method" preoccupied Lawrence's modernist contemporaries. Eliot himself acknowledged the shaping influence of Frazer and Jessie Weston upon *The Waste Land* (1922), and Hemingway's emasculated war-veteran Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) was a reincarnation of the Fisher King. Joyce layered several mythic levels in *Ulysses* (1922), and in *Work in Progress* was dramatising the archetypes themselves. Yeats's *The Resurrection* (1927) juxtaposed Christ and Dionysos. Mrs Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith play the roles of mother goddess and sacrificed god,

respectively, in Woolf s 1925 novel. Lawrence was notoriously hostile towards most contemporary writers, but the models they offered may have had some influence upon the full development of the interest he had already manifested in such experiments. In any case, *The Escaped Cock* certainly must be seen as typical in this regard of its literary era.

Lawrence had warned Russell of the "death" that would result from his denial of the blood-consciousness. When we juxtapose this statement with a letter of 1914 in which Lawrence had advised Gordon Campbell that "Christianity should teach us now, that after our Crucifixion, and the darkness of the tomb, we shall rise again in the flesh, you, I, as we are today, resurrected in the bodies", we can see what he was up to in *The Escaped Cock*.[31] At the beginning of the novella, the "man who had died" had been, like Russell, or Bertie Reid, or the Prussian officer, totally oriented towards mind-conscious values. Emerging from the tomb "in the flesh", he pursues a course almost completely the opposite of his former life, thus moving towards what Yeats termed "Unity of Being". The climactic stage in this process is his encounter with the priestess of Isis. This encounter recalls especially the relationship of Joe and Miss Stokes in "Monkey Nuts", but, unlike Joe, the man does not reject the pull of the blood-consciousness. At the moment of their coming-together, "there was stillness and darkness in his soul, unbroken dark stillness, wholeness". The familiar language of the "blood" pervades the description of the encounter – "he stooped beside her and caressed her softly, blindly, murmuring inarticulate things" – and the biblical "knew" in "And so he knew her, and was at one with her" has a Lawrencean revisionist epistemological weight. In achieving "atonement" with her he in effect becomes Osiris, a "pagan" fertility god, and leaves in her womb the seed of hope for the future.[32]

Several other texts Lawrence wrote in the 1920s, including "The Ladybird", "The Woman Who Rode Away" and *The Plumed Serpent*, contain Frazerian elements.[33] In multiplying titles we must be careful not to exaggerate Frazer's impact upon Lawrence. He was only one of many figures whose work significantly affected the development of Lawrence's thought and writing, and not even a particular favourite. In 1916 Lawrence had placed *The Golden Bough* below Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, and in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* he even ridiculed Frazer as the epitome of smug scientific blindness.[34] But in Frazer Lawrence had found what he needed when he needed it, an empowering confirmation of his own intuited vision of man's psyche. From that point on, elements of *The Golden Bough* were interwoven among his obsessive preoccupations so that his own life coalesced with the cosmic rhythms

of its archetypal patterns. In his late poem "Invocation to the Moon" he addressed the Great Mother imploringly, as one

> who will give me back my lost limbs
> and my lost white fearless breast
> and set again on moon-remembering feet
> a healed whole man, O Moon.[35]

This was the same wholeness as he had urged upon Russell, and as Birkin had longed for; by now the latter's curses had become a prayer.

NOTES

1. Vickery, p. 280.
2. I have discussed Lawrence's interest in the occult in "Lawrence, Yeats, and 'the Resurrection of the Body'", Peter Balbert and Phillip L. Marcus (eds), *D. H. Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 210–36. See also P. T. Whelan, *D. H. Lawrence: Myth and Metaphysic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988).
3. T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth", *The Dial*, November 1923; repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) pp. 175–8. See also above, pp. 193–4.
4. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, II, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 469–71.
5. D. H. Lawrence, *"Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" and "Fantasia of the Unconscious"* (New York: Viking, 1960), p. 56. The reference occurs in the Foreward to *Fantasia*, dated 1921. The sentence Lawrence quotes, "It must have appeared to the ancient Aryan that the sun was periodically recruited from the fire which resided in the sacred oak", is from *GB 2*, III, 455. *GB 1*, II, 367 had "primitive" instead of "ancient"; in *GB 3*, XI, 292 Frazer, responding to new evidence, changed "must" to "may".
6. D. H. Lawrence, *The Symbolic Meaning: The Uncollected Versions of "Studies in Classic American Literature"*, ed. Armin Arnold (New York: Viking, 1964), p. 124; see also p. 69.
7. *GB 2*, I, 10.
8. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, I, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 503. See also *Letters*, II, 102.
9. All citations (given parenthetically in the text) are from D. H. Lawrence, *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories*, ed. John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Keith Cushman, *D. H. Lawrence at Work: The Emergence of the "Prussian Officer" Stories* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), pp. 169ff.
10. Vickery, pp. 309–10.
11. Cf. C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 2nd edn.

R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 219n: "The mountain . . . often has the psychological meaning of the self."
12. Lawrence, *Letters*, II, 392.
13. Ibid., p. 442.
14. For a different explanation of the Frazer–Russell link, see Vickery, p. 281.
15. See Paul Delany, *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 372; and Michael L. Ross, "The Mythology of Friendship: D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and 'The Blind Man'", in S. P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *English Literature and British Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 285–315.
16. All citations of "The Blind Man", "Tickets, Please" and "Monkey Nuts" (given parenthetically in the text) are from *England, My England* (1922), Penguin edn (Harmondsworth, 1982).
17. The inability to approach women physically was Barrie's, not Russell's, problem.
18. Harry T. Moore, *The Priest of Love: A Life of D. H. Lawrence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), p. 216.
19. Janice Hubbard Harris, *The Short Fiction of D. H. Lawrence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), pp. 152–3. See also Judith Ruderman, *D. H. Lawrence and the Devouring Mother* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), pp. 87–8.
20. All citations (given parenthetically in the text) are from *Women in Love*, ed. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
21. Lawrence, *The Symbolic Meaning*, p. 101.
22. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, III, ed. James T. Boulton and Andrew Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 301–2; see also *The Symbolic Meaning*, p. 115.
23. See Whelan, *Lawrence: Myth and Metaphysic*, pp. 60–1.
24. Lawrence, *The Symbolic Meaning*, p. 71.
25. All citations (given parenthetically in the text) are from *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), Doubleday edn (Garden City, NY, n.d.).
26. Lawrence, *Letters*, II, 364.
27. Lawrence, *The Symbolic meaning*, p. 127.
28. D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Modern Library edn (New York, n.d.), p. 266.
29. Lawrence, *Letters*, II, 633–4.
30. Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Grail Legend*, 2nd edn, tr. Andrea Dykes (Boston, Mass.: Sigo Press, 1986), p. 192; see also p. 197.
31. Lawrence, *Letters*, II, 246–50; see also Marcus, in Balbert and Marcus (eds), *Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration*, pp. 211–36.
32. D. H. Lawrence, *The Escaped Cock*, ed. Gerald M. Lacy (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1973), pp. 56–8.
33. See especially Sandra Gilbert's brilliant essay "Potent Griselda: 'The Ladybird' and the Great Mother", in Balbert and Marcus (ed.), *Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration*, pp. 130–61.
34. Lawrence, II, 590, 630; *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, pp. 56–7.
35. *The Complete Poems of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (1964; repr. New York: Viking, 1971), p. 696.

XIII

"FOR GODS ARE KITTLE CATTLE": FRAZER AND JOHN BUCHAN

Christopher Harvie

I

> Scott, Tolstoi, Meredith, an odd volume of a Saga library, an odd volume of the "Corpus Boreale", some Irish reprints, Stevenson's poems, Virgil and the "Pilgrim's Progress", and a French Gazetteer of Mountains wedged above them. And then an odd Badminton volume, French "Memoirs", a Dante, a Homer, and a badly-printed German text of Schopenhauer! Three different copies of Rabelais, a De Thon, a Horace, and – bless my soul! – about twenty books of fairy tales.[1]

The Half-Hearted was John Buchan's first attempt at a serious contemporary novel, and its opening section, concerning the political ambitions of a young Border laird, Lewis Haystoun, is strongly autobiographical. In the second half, Haystoun is transported to the North-West Frontier, to redeem failures in love and politics by foiling – at the cost of his own life – a Russian descent on the Indian empire. *The Half-Hearted* is not a successful novel (Buchan had never been further east than Switzerland) but the critic David Daniell argues that it contains many of the themes that Buchan would later use in a more concentrated and dramatically satisfactory way, themes which are hinted at in the contents of Haystoun's library. "Rich in intellectual resources" was one of Gertrude Himmelfarb's more accurate comments on Buchan in an otherwise very misleading article,[2] and it is interesting to see that, even at this early date – the novelist was only twenty-five – a preoccupation with popular myth had already made itself apparent.

This sort of thing is interesting to Buchan enthusiasts, a growing number but still regarded as closer in spirit to Sherlock Holmes fans than to academic critics. The latter will be spurred to ask, "But is Buchan important?" David Daniell in *The Interpreter's House* (1975) complains

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

that few serious writers have ever been so mishandled by critics,[3] and although this has improved a lot in the twenty-three years since Janet Adam Smith's perceptive *Life*, the frequency with which the words "imperialist", "anti-semite", "hearty" and "clubman" still appear associated with his name suggests that Buchan remains trapped in a particular character role. This is, however, a view from the south; in Scotland, where a sort of intellectual Unilateral Declaration of Independence occurred during the 1980s, Buchan's reputation has been projected more positively, and he is now coming to be seen – as indeed he was in his own lifetime – as one of the founding spirits of the inter-war Scottish renaissance, whom Hugh MacDiarmid himself saluted as "The Dean of the Faculty of Modern Scottish Letters".[4]

This reputation does not simply rest on the imaginative writing he wanted to be assessed by – on such serious fictions as *Witch Wood* (1928) and the posthumous *Sick Heart River* (1940) – or on his work as anthologist and biographer – *The Northern Muse* (1924) and *Sir Walter Scott* (1932) – but on the cast of thought revealed, only semi-consciously, even in his "shockers": something as "dissident" as the philosophies of leading writers of the renaissance, such as Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Neil Gunn and Naomi Mitchison. If, as Roderick Watson and Douglas Gifford have argued, a salient feature of the renaissance was a preoccupation with the socialising functions of myths and archetypes, then few writers were richer in this respect than Buchan.[5] He was not only a facilitator but, in the ironic sense in which he excelled, a participant as well. David Daniell's analysis has advanced us a fair way along the path to understanding the mythic element in Buchan, and how pervasive it was throughout his career. He comments as follows on a passage in the very early novel *John Burnet of Barns*:

> What John Buchan stumbled upon, or received, was the discovery of his ability to create myth. These great symbols of fish and pool, and height and depth, and dark and light, youth and age, movement and sleep, and plunge, and the wide-eyed girl in the forest who appears after the initiation, compensating for loss; the terror, the Dragon, the voice of love and the saying of the name, these are all part of a myth of creation. The elements appear universally in various arrangements and forms, at moments when something important is being made, like the world.[6]

Daniell rests his case on an essentially Christian cosmology, the use of a world of imagination and metaphor drawn from the Bible and from

Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. But, while this is true of several of the novels, it rests on a further, more conglomerated base, which the massive documentation of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, in its various editions, helped pile up.

Yet there is no reference to Buchan in any work dealing with Frazer's influence, and no reference to Frazer in any work dealing with Buchan. John B. Vickery's *The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough"* (1973) surveys Frazer's influence on Yeats, Eliot, Lawrence and Joyce, and nods in the direction of one Scots renaissance writer, Naomi Mitchison,[7] but evidently found Buchan beneath notice. Robert Ackerman, in his critical biography of Frazer, likewise neglects the compatriot whom the old anthropologist outlived by a year, but in describing Frazer's influence he comes quite close to describing the cumulative effect of Buchan's writings, at least in Scotland: "he was appreciated by thousands of ordinary readers for his literary power, which fundamentally changed the way they saw themselves, and some of their social and religious institutions. In this sense his influence has been immense if diffused . . . ."[8]

In fact, the more we analyse Buchan, the more we become aware not only that he knew Frazer's work, but that what he there encountered mattered more to him, as writer, administrator and politician, than it did to the desk-bound anthropologist who, in the words of his biographer in the *DNB*, "was mainly impressed by what seemed to him to be the utter futility of the world which he surveyed".[9] Buchan was, throughout his career, preoccupied with the mythic and the irrational in politics, something from which Frazer recoiled; yet perhaps the most famous line in Buchan, the super-anarchist Andrew Lumley's warning to Edward Leithen in *The Power House* (1913) – "You think that a wall as solid as the earth separates civilisation from Barbarism. I tell you the division is a thread, a sheet of glass . . ."[10] – could almost have been plucked directly from *The Golden Bough*:

> It is not our business here to consider what bearing the permanent existence of such a solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society, and unaffected by the superficial changes of religion and culture, has upon the future of humanity. The dispassionate observer, whose studies have led him to plumb its depths, can hardly regard it otherwise than as a standing menace to civilisation. We seem to move on a thin crust which may at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below. From time to time a hollow murmur

underground or a sudden spirt of flame into the air tells of what is going on beneath our feet.[11]

Did Buchan therefore follow Frazer? The question is more complex than it might appear, and involves paying some attention to the social and intellectual milieu out of which both men emerged.

II

Frazer and Buchan were both sons of apparently happy, well-integrated Scots families closely attached to the Free Kirk, the independent Presbyterian body which took more than a third of the clergy and laity of the Church of Scotland with it when it seceded in 1843. They came to maturity at a period when Scottish nationality, and intellectual autonomy, were under threat both from pressure to assimilate to English norms and from the reorientation of politics from regional to class lines, something which the careers of both men reflected, in quitting Glasgow after a first degree to seek further intellectual development in the south – Frazer at Trinity College, Cambridge, Buchan at Brasenose, Oxford.

It is evident from Buchan's *oeuvre* as well as from his autobiographical writings how deep an imprint his Scottish upbringing left. Of particular importance were the moral precepts of the Free Kirk, in which his father was a minister, and the contact he gained through his mother's family, the Mastertons of Broughton Place in the lonely valley of the upper Tweed, with the oral tradition of the Border ballads. We know much less about Frazer's upbringing, but from the references in *The Golden Bough* itself, where it treats of Scottish folklore, we can deduce that there was, in Frazer's youth – as distinct from the youth of Buchan or Andrew Lang – no direct contact with the oral tradition. Frazer did not turn to the academic study of folklore until 1883, when he was almost thirty, and did so at the behest of his close friend William Robertson Smith, the leading theologian of the Free Church. Robertson Smith too had no contact with any Scottish folkloric tradition, although he was brought up in Aberdeenshire, where the American scholar Francis Childs was later to find the greatest repository of the traditional folk ballads. As Gavin Greig and the Revd Joseph Duncan were to find in the 1900s in their Carnegie-grant financed folksong researches, even Childs's discoveries only scratched the surface of a rich oral tradition of which even experienced folklorists never dreamed.[12] In the Borders of Lang and Buchan, thanks to Scott, Hogg and the Chambers brothers, the

deposits lay nearer the surface.

A connection between Frazer and Buchan does, however, exist, in the shape of John Veitch, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Glasgow University, who was both a major influence on Frazer – drawing him to the "conjectural history" of the eighteenth-century Scots Enlightenment[13] – and on Buchan, whom he knew in Peebles as well as in Glasgow, and whose influence drew Buchan towards the academic study of philosophy.[14] Buchan was fifteen when the first edition of *The Golden Bough* was published, and it is possible that it was Veitch, already a family friend, who brought it to his notice.

In philosophic terms, however, Frazer was mid-Victorian, strongly influenced by the materialism of the utilitarians and Herbert Spencer, while Buchan fused the Scots common-sense tradition to the idealism established by T. H. Green at Oxford and transmitted to Glasgow by Edward Caird and Henry Jones. His philosophy enabled Buchan to maintain a belief in an "immanent" deity who expressed his will through the supremacy of human reason and natural causation. Drawing on the paradigms of evolution ingested into British utilitarianism from Comtism, an agnostic such as Frazer needed to see causation disrupted, through the intervention of the paranormal, before he would grant credence to any sort of theism.

Cambridge reinforced Frazer's materialism, which he derived from one reading of the Scots sociological tradition. In this, mythology was to be explored with the intention of illuminating the evolution of modern social institutions from superstition through priestcraft to rational organisation. In the mid nineteenth century this had concentrated on the issue of the origin of the family. Following Ferguson and Millar, the Scots anthropologists, notably J. F. M'Lennan, had assumed that primitive men lived in tribes or "hordes" in which sex relations were promiscuous; individuation into the nuclear family came through "exogamy", the capture of women from other, warring hordes, and the policing of the property of the horde by taboos and totems which came in time to acquire a religious significance and survived the evolution of "nuclear" families. This construct was based on arbitrary foundations, achieved by inverting all the values of Victorian civil society, the promiscuous horde in a "militant" society being the antithesis of the nuclear family in an "industrial" society. If incest were regarded as the primal taboo, it followed that exogamy, along with polyandry in the horde, and matrilinear inheritance, delineated the earliest forms of society.

This approach to society bore the hallmarks of the "conjectural history" of the Scottish Enlightenment in its logical tightness and fundamental

dogmatism. Evans-Pritchard writes that M'Lennan's *Primitive Marriage* fitted together in an exemplary way, once its premises were granted, but its one open-ended element, the accumulation of data empirically verifying the theory, was naturally its weakest point.[15] The anthropological progression of the nineteenth century is thus to a great extent the displacement of system-building by empirical research, in which key roles were taken by two Scots, M'Lennan's friend William Robertson Smith and Andrew Lang. Robertson Smith's study of the social anthropology of the Old Testament, undertaken while he was Professor of Old Testament Theology at the Free Church College in Aberdeen, established a crucial bridgehead for empirical research backed up by field-work. Andrew Lang was no less effective in assaulting the dominant philological explanation of myth, represented by the Oxford magus Friedrich Max Müller, which claimed myth to be a function of the lexicographical limitations of the Aryan tongues.[16]

Buchan later wrote that he first encountered Lang's work at the age of seventeen, when Lang became "the chief deity in my pantheon".[17] This would be in 1892, two years after the publication of the First Edition of *The Golden Bough*, when Lang and Frazer were still on terms of friendship, and Lang still broadly followed Frazer's evolutionary sequence. The two were still on friendly terms in 1898 and a total breach did not occur until 1900, over Lang's repeated hostile criticisms of the Second (much enlarged) Edition of *The Golden Bough* on the grounds that there was no inevitable law that religion and priestcraft should take over from magic.[18] By this time Buchan had met Lang, in 1896. As he counted himself a close friend and was, like Lang, a theist, it was almost inevitable that he would have taken Lang's side in the controversy, but by 1901 he had left for South Africa and his job on the High Commission – probably with a distinct sense of relief.

Buchan derived from Lang a sense of the universality of folklore. What Lang had written in 1896 – "All peoples notoriously tell the same myths, fairy tales, fables and improper stories, repeat the same proverbs, are amused by the same riddles or devinettes, and practise the same, or closely analogous, religious rites and mysteries"[19] – Buchan echoed nearly thirty-five years later in his English Association lecture "The Novel and the Fairy Tale", in which he stressed the uniformity and didactic purpose of the genre:

> My argument is that only in so far as the novel is a development of and akin to the folk and fairy tale does it fully succeed, and that it is in this kinship that the virtue of the great Victorian novels especially

lies.

I observe about these novels that in the first place they tell a good story – something which grips and enthrals the reader, with true drama and wonder in it. In the second place they pass judgements on these characters; that is, the story-teller regards some as definitely good and some as definitely bad. In the third place, their method of reproducing reality is not that of an inventory of details, but of a judicious selection. In the fourth place, the story-teller is primarily interested in the events he has to tell of, and not in what the jargon of today calls his "reactions" to them. He does not stop to obtrude his own moods. Lastly, he has a dominant purpose, a lesson if you like, to teach, a creed to suggest. . . .

Now all these things the great Victorians had. Most of these things their critics lack. All these things the folk-tales possess.[20]

On the other hand, what Buchan was to gain from Frazer was not what that stern materialist had intended, but the awareness that myth and irrational were not displaced by "mass" industrial society but in fact given greater salience by it, either as destructive, atavistic forces or as benign archetypes, adherence to which kept human appetites under control.

III

It would be wrong to read the direct influence of the social pessimism of *The Golden Bough* into Buchan's "shocker" fiction – or at least into his pre-war output. I have argued elsewhere that the notion of civilisation as a thin crust over the infernal has a long pedigree, going back (at least) to Carlyle's discussion of the French Revolution in "Characteristics". It reappeared in Disraeli's last novel, *Falconet*, first published in 1905 (Disraeli, whose biography Buchan wanted to write, was also an addict of fairy stories), in H. G. Wells's *The New Machiavelli* (1910), where it is voiced by Mr Evesham, a fictionalised version of Arthur Balfour.[21] The actual plot of *The Power House* shows the super-intellectual villain, Lumley, brought down by a decent but not over-bright lawyer, Edward Leithen, and an enthusiastic but bungling Labour MP – which was one way of saying that the security of the country *was* genuine, and not canvas painted to look like stone and stretched over a chasm.

But Frazerian themes had entered Buchan's repertoire: the sacrifice of the hero is Lewis Haystoun's fate in *The Half-Hearted*. In *Prester John* (1910) the triumphal ritual of John Laputa seems almost like an

operatic résumé of *The Golden Bough*:

> But the music told its own tale. It spoke of old kings and great battles, of splendid palaces and strong battlements, of queens white as ivory, of death and life, love and hate, joy and sorrow. It spoke, too, of desperate things, mysteries of horror long shut to the world. No Kaffir ever forged that ritual. It must have come straight from Prester John or Sheba's Queen, or whoever ruled in Africa when time was young.[22]

Laputa's death in the cave is, moreover, followed by David Craufurd (storekeeper, about to become administrator) struggling through a crevice into the light, in a symbolic act of rebirth.[23] The poem "Wood Magic" sets a scene reminiscent of the haunting opening of *The Golden Bough*: a "Christian" shepherd, blessing himself while passing an old altar, invokes whatever deities come to hand – "for gods are kittle cattle" (Scots for "sensitive creatures") – thus implying a continuity between the old faiths and Christianity.

> Down by the edge of the firs, in a coppice of heath and vine,
> Is an old moss-grown altar, shaded by briar and bloom,
> Denys, the priest, hath told me 'twas the lord Apollo's shrine
> In the days ere Christ came down from God to the Virgin's womb.
> I never go past but I doff my cap and avert my eyes –
>   (Were Denys to catch me I trow I'd do penance for half a year) –
> For once I saw a flame there and the smoke of a sacrifice,
>   And a voice spake out of the thicket that froze my soul with fear.
>
> Wherefore to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
>   Mary the Blessed Mother, and the kindly Saints as well,
> I will give glory and praise, and them I cherish the most,
>   For they have the keys of Heaven, and save the soul from Hell.
> But likewise I will spare for the lord Apollo a grace,
> And a bow for the Lady Venus – as a friend but not as a thrall.
> 'Tis true they are out of Heaven, but some day they may win the place;
> For gods are kittle cattle, and a wise man honours them all.[24]

Frazer reacted to the First World War with a conventional patriotism which may have been heightened by the fact that his wife was French. Like most of the older Trinity dons he refused to petition the College Council against their decision to deprive Bertrand Russell of his fellowship because of his pacifist activity.[25] Buchan, already well-connected with

publishing and propaganda (he was a director of Nelson's, and a cousin by marriage – C. F. G. Masterman – was first Director of Propaganda), published a regularly updated and – in the circumstances – pretty reliable war history, wrote two famous "shockers" – *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *Greenmantle* – which packed a fair propaganda clout, and rose in government service to finish the war as administrative head of the Ministry of Information. The "Richard Hannay" trilogy, completed in 1919 with *Mr Standfast*, and various short stories written out of his own experience in intelligence work, show a mind reluctant to allocate blame, and mindful above all of the sacrifices that the war had entailed.[26]

A relatively optimistic view pervades the symposium *The Island of Sheep* which Buchan wrote with his wife Susan in 1919. As in his *Lodge in the Wilderness*, written over a decade before, a group of rulers and opinion-formers foregather in some remote place to discuss the future. The social mixture is much the same, but with the addition of three "Labour" representatives and a minister of religion, MacMillan, who acts as the master of ceremonies, commencing and concluding the proceedings with a sermon. His observation, made two-thirds through the discussions, conveys their tone: "Politics is a collection of views, most of them contradictory and nearly all of them true."[27] Identified by sympathetic socialists and self-denying businessmen, the enemies are defined as intellectualism, greed and *laisser-faire.*

To give shape to the resulting intellectual muddle – of cross-purposes rather than hostility – MacMillan preaches democratic nationality and religious ecumenism. Then, in his concluding sermon, he reminds his congregation of the legend of Balder and Walhalla. Balder, pierced by darkness, falls to Hell. Weeping does not bring him back. Walhalla must fall, and the deluge must come, before Balder will reappear: "We have long been trying to bring Balder back by our tears, but they were only tears of sentiment, and arrogance still ruled our hearts. Now we have passed through our Ragnarok and the old pride has fallen. Perhaps the day is near when Balder will wake from his sleep."[28] The influence of Frazer's *Balder the Beautiful*, published in 1913, as well as Matthew Arnold's "Balder Dead", is evident here. Yet the myth has an intriguing irony for those familiar with Buchan's fondness for intellectual jokes. German military opinion credited Buchan's ministry with spreading the anti-war sentiment among German servicemen and civilians which led to the mutinies of autumn 1918: the "stab in the back" which allowed Ludendorff and his colleagues to compare themselves to Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied* – and use the legend in general, and the Wagner music dramas in particular, as a text for vengeance.

His propaganda duties also involved Buchan in an attempt to probe German national psychology, and a course of reading in the state of the art of German psychoanalysis. Catherine Carswell, who managed the difficult feat of being on good terms with Buchan *and* D. H. Lawrence, wrote that he had mastered all the standard texts, which must have meant Freud and Jung, "with attention and respect".[29] Freudian traces in Buchan are pretty limited, because of his notoriously low sex-drive; Jung, as exact contemporary and, like Buchan, a son of the Calvinist manse, was likely to be a more agreeable ideologue; but both would lead back to Frazer and *The Golden Bough*, because of their interest in custom and habit, totem and taboo.

This grounding in psychology became immediately relevant as the more optimistic predictions about the war's consequences came unstuck, particularly in Scotland, where by late 1920 the post-war boom was over, and unemployment was edging above 20 per cent. In the first of Richard Hannay's peacetime adventures, *The Three Hostages* (1924), a psychologist, Dr Greenslade, is brought in to argue that the war has produced a general unsettlement. Granted that "the fact of the subconscious self is as certain as the existence of lungs and arteries", "with the general loosening of screws they are growing shaky and two worlds are getting ruined . . . you can't any longer take the clear psychology of most human beings for granted. Something is welling up from primeval deeps to muddy it."[30] The problem is that the savage is more complicated to understand, and what happened between 1914 and 1918 has released all sorts of atavisms within civilised society, making it necessary to use anthropological techniques to understand what was going on.

In 1929 the Russian Communist critic D. S. Mirsky, in his study of the British intellectuals, argued that the growing enthusiasm for Frazer's anthropology was evidence of a break-up of bourgeois liberal values on the part of the British intellectuals, an enthusiasm for irrationalism and authoritarianism.[31] This could be applied to Buchan, in so far as he became fixated with the notion of "kingship" and the qualities which went towards it. By "kingship" is not to be understood the hereditary principle but the role in history of the remarkable individual. In his Rede Lecture of 1929, *The Causal and the Casual in History*, Buchan attacked the tendency to rationalise historical events into inevitabilities: "The movement of mankind is not by a single-gauge track; there is a network of tracks, and the one actually taken may owe its choice to the blindest chance."[32] Although he did not subscribe to the Cleopatra's Nose notion of the play of completely random factors – the "main lines" were already

determined by social and economic change[33] – chance events and remarkable individuals (Napoleons, Lincolns, Lenins) could cause particular sets of points to operate. As far as the "remarkable individuals" were concerned, it was necessary to understand their make-up and the circumstances in which they attained success, not – a side-swipe at Lytton Strachey – to belittle them.[34]

Such a theme lies behind much of Buchan's later writing. *The Path of the King* (1921) traces the fortunes of a line of descent whose bearers are sometimes unfortunate, sometimes premature in their ideals, sometimes weak, but on occasion – and at the cost of their own security – grasp at the point-lever and pull it in a particular way. Buchan's "Edward Leithen" adventure *The Dancing Floor* (1926) has a young English country gentleman haunted by a dream of a strange house on a Greek island and an ordeal he must endure. Travelling in the Aegean, he discovers the mysterious house, and that he is perceived by the locals as being the priest–king "who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain", who must marry the daughter of the house, and then be sacrificed with her. He gets the girl – "it was not Koré I was looking at but *the* Koré, the immortal maiden, who brings to the earth its annual redemption"[35] – and the apparition of the two of them, on Good Friday, drives the peasants of Plakos back to the rituals of the Greek Easter, in which a wooden Christ-figure is entombed and then resurrected.

IV

Such books were more or less entertainments, but between 1928 and his death Buchan wrote three serious novels, *Witch Wood*, *A Prince of the Captivity* and *Sick Heart River*, which engaged with the problems he considered as basic to his time, and the role in them of "a bit of something else, good, bad – but never indifferent . . . which may make a man a saint or a villain".[36]

Of these works *Witch Wood* (1928),[37] Buchan's own favourite among his novels, is the most overtly Frazerian, as *The Golden Bough* deals at some length with pre-Christian midsummer or Beltane rites in Scotland.[38] A young minister, schooled as a humanist in the classics, goes to the remote upland parish of Woodilee – recognisable as Buchan's Tweedsmuir – in 1643 when the Marquess of Montrose is attempting, against the power of the General Assembly of the Kirk, to raise Scotland for King Charles. David Sempill finds that leading figures of his congregation, "earnest in the work" by day, preside over orgiastic rituals

round an old Roman altar in the "Black Wood" of Mellanudrigill, a last vestige of the old Caledonian forest. The rituals involve mass copulation and human sacrifice. Sempill meets Montrose and is introduced to his ideal of a "balanced" constitution; he meets in the wood, and falls in love with, Katrine Yester, the niece of one of the King's leading supporters in the neighbourhood.

In her charm and innocent sensuality Katrine transforms her part of the wood into "Paradise", another ritual out of Frazer signifying a religious veneration for a particular place whose qualities have a symbiotic relationship with their priestess. She symbolises how a pre-Christian faith could be innocent and guilt-free until perverted by men whose intensity of belief and intolerance destroyed any hope of a blending of faiths and replaced both with perversion and persecution.

The novel ends tragically. Chasehope, the leader of the coven, has David excommunicated but goes mad when the minister drags him into the Black Wood, not before Katrine has died helping David succour the victims of plague. The novel ends with David on his way to the Thirty Years' War as a mercenary, and Montrose not far from his death on the scaffold in Edinburgh.

A Prince of the Captivity was published by Buchan in July 1933, a year after his address to the English Association "The Novel and the Fairy Tale". Most of Buchan's friends, and most of his commentators, have found it a strange and unsatisfactory book.[39] Its hero, Adam Melfort, is a brilliant staff officer in the pre-1914 British army who goes to prison by taking responsibility for a cheque forged by his silly, shallow wife. He works his way back by acting as a spy behind the German lines during the First World War and then rescues a millionaire, Falconet, who has gone missing in the Arctic. He goes on to involve himself in Labour politics in a Midlands industrial town and protects from assassination attempts by Communists and Iron Hands (Nazis) the one politician who can save the Weimar Republic. Then he comes up against his greatest challenge: an economist and financier called Warren Creevey whose speculations have brought about the political instability in which extremism lives.

Creevey is an "absolute intellectual" in the tradition of Andrew Lumley and Dominick Medina in *The Three Hostages*, but without the latter's pathological qualities. Where Hannay had broken Medina – although at the last moment trying to redeem him – Melfort tries to re-create a humane quality in Creevey. He arranges for the aeroplane carrying Creevey to make a forced landing in the Italian Alps, in order that he can put Creevey through a sort of outward-bound course in character

development. The Iron Hands, however, are out to revenge themselves on Melfort, and track the pair over the Salluzana Pass. Melfort, whose strength has been overtaxed, urges Creevey to get ahead, and then dislodges a rock mass which cuts the Iron Hands off from Creevey.

Throughout his missions, Melfort has had visions of Eilean Bán, an island which he owns off the west coast of Scotland, and of his son, Nigel, who died of meningitis at six. The figure of the boy is precise, but the island's geography is always changing. With a moralised Creevey on his way to a new life of social and economic reform, Adam finds that he has reached the island's other sea-coast, and that the figure of the little boy is speaking to him. Then the Iron Hands move in for the kill, but not before Creevey has been imbued with Melfort's character: "I must have you with me – always . . . . I will follow you. I will be with you always."[40] Melfort is obviously the sacrificed priest–king, but his function is now integrated into that Jungian system of psychoanalysis so influential in the Scottish renaissance. Creevey is Melfort's "shadow": antipathetic to Melfort's soldierly qualities but possessed of an intelligence and worldly wisdom that Melfort patently lacks (as witness his inept attempts at social reform in Birkpool). His ultimate sacrifice enables a reintegration of animus and anima in Creevey, twentieth-century man. Such rituals are now seen by Buchan as ways whereby what T. S. Eliot called the "dissociated sensibility" of the modern world can be reintegrated.

In the circumstances, this faith was misplaced. By the time *A Prince of the Captivity* was published, Hitler had come to power. One incidental observation of Buchan's during the First World War – that the real strength of Germany rested in its non-commissioned officer class – came to fruition, as well as that apprehension of uncontrollable evil which had marked the books he had written since the war.

Buchan had been an MP – Conservative, for the Scottish Universities – since 1927. His parliamentary career was less distinguished than he had hoped, but he did act as confidant to two prime ministers, Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, and to King George V, and this underlay his final translation, to Canada as Governor-General in 1935.

Buchan's final novel, *Sick Heart River*, written while in office and published after his death, puzzled his staff, who found it sombre and introverted.[41] It concerns Buchan's first "shocker" hero, Sir Edward Leithen, but it does not have a thriller plot. Leithen, who is, apparently, terminally ill with tuberculosis, takes on the task of finding a French-Canadian financier, Francis Gaillard, who has disappeared in the Canadian north. He contacts Johnny Frizel, a Scots-Indian halfbreed, whose brother, Lew, has gone as Gaillard's guide. Johnny tells him that Lew

has an obsession about an Edenic valley in the far north, the Sick Heart River, and may have headed there, so he and Leithen head into unmapped territory in search of the Sick Heart. They find a deranged Gaillard, but Leithen, whose health is beginning to improve, presses on alone to the Sick Heart, where he finds Lew. But the valley, although tranquil and green, is dead; no animals can live there. He has to get Lew out, and at the limits of his endurance, he does so.

Gaillard and both of the Frizels have all been affected by "the madness of the north" and have to return to rationality. This they do through the agency of Leithen, who finds himself acting as a sort of medicine man. This process is completed when the party returns to the camp of the Hare Indians, who have, following an epidemic, become totally demoralised. Leithen, sufficiently well recovered to go back to England – now at war – decides to remain and organise, with Gaillard, the hunting of winter food for the Hares. This he does, letting his friends go off to the war when recovered. "Compared to his companions Leithen suddenly saw himself founded solidly, like an oak. He was drawing life from deep sources. Death, if it came, was no blind trick of fate, but a thing accepted and therefore mastered."[42]

The Hares are saved, but Leithen's tuberculosis recurs and he dies, still a half-believing Calvinist, in the log presbytery of a French-Canadian Catholic missionary. Leithen is not only a sacrificial priest–king, but also provides, by hunting, a function which antedates the Demeter goddess, and concurs with a leading myth of the Scots renaissance, particularly salient in Neil Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon: the "golden age" of the hunting horde.[43]

V

I believe that these three stories, in which Buchan seems deeply to have involved himself, imply something more than simply ransacking Frazer for entertaining myths, although Frazer would probably have been worried about the semi-theistic uses to which his learning was being put. After the First World War Buchan seems to have derived three notions from Frazer, or had these confirmed by his wartime experience. The first was the fragility of civilisation. A rhetorical flourish in his pre-war books, this had now become reality: man's capability to originate evil, and follow others into it, was far greater than he had ever calculated. Medina, for example, represents a will-to-power unconstrained by any of the scruples Buchan associated with Western Christendom: an "Asiatic"

combination of the wielding of power and its abnegation. He saw similar qualities in Lenin, perhaps even in Disraeli, whose biography he wanted to write, who also lauded "pure intellect", and to whom Medina is compared.[44]

Linked to this was something derived from Freud and transposed from sexuality to religion: repressive doctrine. Repression, to Buchan, stemmed from the adoption of over-mechanistic views of religion which negated its involvement in the "holistic" world of the cycle of nature, and produced perverted and ultimately evil forms of religious observance. A particular Scottish influence here was James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), which Buchan must have been introduced to via Andrew Lang and which he used in *Witch Wood* to account for the conversion of "innocent" paganism into devil-worship.[45]

Finally, myth and ritual gave to a humanity assailed by "mass culture" and "mass politics" a prospect of intellectual and ecological harmony. Buchan was reared in an intellectual tradition in which the scientific had always been related to the anthropological and the theological: by the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, by Thomas Chalmers in the early nineteenth century, by Henry Drummond in Buchan's father's day. It was something that became acute to Buchan in the post-war turmoil, when all the structures of liberal capitalism seemed in process of being overthrown. In *The Dancing Floor* Vernon Milburne recognises the rituals of Plakos as something going back not just beyond Christianity but predating the "noisy, middle-class family party" of the Greek gods: "You may call her Demeter, or Aphrodite, or Hera, but she is the same, the Virgin and the Mother, the 'mistress of wild things', the 'priestess of the new birth in spring'."[46] In *Sick Heart River* this "natural theology" is assimilated into the Canadian Indians' respect for their natural environment. The pollution and environmental destruction that Gaillard's factory has inflicted on the Clairefontaine, and the destructive conflicts that the industrialised nation states have loosed on the world, afflict the Hare Indians through the *accidie* which follows an epidemic illness – which Leithen sacrifices himself to cure.[47]

Both Frazer and Buchan were products of that peculiar involvement of the Scots with empire, whereby patronage and career development and economic exploitation were also linked up with the *totum scibile* of the Scots intellectual: his mission to know, but also to evangelise. Frazer's was a positivist progression – from magic through religion to philosophy and science. It coincided with the confident expounding of Darwinian sequences of development which, for example, underlay the mental world founded by Sir Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain* of 1869 and A. V.

Dicey's *Law of the Constitution* of 1886, in which progress was marked by the extension of the material culture of railways, steamers, telegraphs, and so on, and the appropriate Benthamite rules and regulations. Frazer's purpose was to assimilate anthropology and folklore to such structures, and in so doing to "historicise" it.

By Buchan's time, the impetus of "modernisation" was flagging, the "frontier" was beginning to react on the "core". Philosophies of "indirect rule" such as that of Lugard in Nigeria were stressing the importance of the customary and the traditional, and the Boer statesman J. C. Smuts' "holism" postulated a new relationship between man and his natural environment. In those circumstances Buchan made the Golden Bough not a parasite on a materialist oak, but a branch which had to bear much of the weight of modern statecraft.

NOTES

1. John Buchan, *The Half-Hearted* (London: Isbister, 1900), p. 100.
2. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "John Buchan, the Last Victorian", *Encounter*, 1960; repr. in *Victorian Minds* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 255.
3. David Daniell, *The Interpreter's House* (London: Nelson, 1975), p. 205.
4. C. M. Grieve, "John Buchan" (1925), in *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, 1976.
5. Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 396, 406; Douglas Gifford, *Gibbon and Gunn* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1983), p. 8.
6. Daniell, *The Interpreter's House*, p. 15.
7. Vickery, p. 123.
8. Ackerman, p. 3.
9. E. O. James, "Sir James George Frazer, 1854–1941", in *Dictionary of National Biography 1941–1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).
10. John Buchan, *The Power House* (London: Blackwood, 1916), p. 64.
11. *GB 2*, I, 74–5. Cf. also *Psyche's Task*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 166–70.
12. See Ian A. Olson, "Scottish Traditional Song and the Greig–Duncan Collection: Last Leaves or Last Rites", in Cairns Craig (ed.), *History of Scottish Literature*, IV (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), 37–48.
13. Ackerman, p. 5.
14. Janet Adam Smith, *John Buchan* (1965: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 36; and see G. E. Davie, *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961), pp. 87–8.
15. Sir E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *A History of Anthropological Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), pp. 62–8.
16. R. Dorson, *The British Folklorists* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 206–12.

17. John Buchan, *Andrew Lang and the Border* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 1.
18. Ackerman, pp. 150ff.
19. *Longman's Magazine*, XXVIII (October 1896), 632.
20. Address to the Scottish Branch of the English Association, 22 November 1930.
21. See Christopher Harvie, "Political Thrillers and the Condition of England", in Arthur Marwick (ed.), *Literature and Society* (London: Methuen, 1990).
22. John Buchan, *Prester John* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1910), p. 137.
23. Daniell, *The Interpreter's House*, p. 110.
24. First published 1911, repr. in *The Clearing House*, ed. Susan Buchan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946), p. 194.
25. Ackerman, pp. 263–4.
26. See in particular John Buchan, "The Loathly Opposite", in *The Runagates Club* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928).
27. "Cadmus and Harmonia", in John and Susan Buchan, *The Island of Sheep* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), p. 163.
28. Ibid., p. 189.
29. Catherine Carswell, in Susan Lady Tweedsmuir (ed.), *John Buchan, by his Wife and Friends* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), p. 163.
30. John Buchan, *The Three Hostages* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), p. 17.
31. D. S. Mirsky, *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), p. 101.
32. John Buchan, *The Causal and the Casual in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 16.
33. Ibid., p. 20.
34. Ibid., p. 14.
35. John Buchan, *The Dancing Floor* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), p. 304.
36. Quoted in Daniell, *The Interpreter's House*, p. 128.
37. John Buchan, *Witch Wood*, ed. and introduction by Christopher Harvie (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1988).
38. *GB 3*, x, 146ff.
39. See the dismissive review by William Plomer in *The Spectator*, 21 July 1933; see also *The Times Literary Supplement*, 6 July 1933, which, however, observes of Buchan's episodes, "they do stimulate in the reader a conception of great nations massing at cross-roads, clamouring for guidance and obtaining none".
40. John Buchan, *A Prince of the Captivity* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), p. 381.
41. John Buchan, *Sick Heart River* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1941).
42. Ibid., p. 213.
43. See Gifford, *Gibbon and Gunn*, p. 147.
44. Buchan, *Three Hostages*, pp. 74, 82.
45. Buchan, *Witch Wood*, pp. 66ff.
46. Buchan, *The Dancing Floor*, p. 43.
47. Buchan, *Sick Heart River*, pp. 226–7.

XIV

"THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THOUGHT": FRAZER, FREUD AND POST-MODERNIST FICTION

A. S. Byatt

"PERHAPS no book has had so decisive an effect upon modern literature as Frazer's", wrote Lionel Trilling in 1961.*The Golden Bough* stands at the head of his list of essential texts for understanding modern literary culture, and the reasons he gives are to do with the modern understanding of myth.

> Anyone who thinks about modern literature in a systematic way takes for granted the great part played in it by myth, and especially by those examples of myth which tell about gods dying and being reborn – the imagination of death and rebirth, reiterated in the ancient world in innumerable variations that are yet always the same, captivated the literary mind at the very moment when, as all accounts of the modern age agree, the most massive and compelling of all the stories of resurrection had lost much of its hold upon the world.[1]

When Trilling, in this context, talks about myth, he is thinking of the net of associations that are called up, for those who studied literature in the 1950s and 1960s, by Eliot's remark about *Ulysses* and the use of "myth" as a way of ordering and controlling the chaos and futility of modern life.[2] Joyce was an ex-Catholic; Eliot had a predisposition to belief; Pound saw Aphrodite. The literary atmosphere in which the Notes to *The Waste Land* were written, and even more read, was one in which, to quote Trilling again,

> many readers will feel that Frazer makes all faith and ritual indigenous to humanity, virtually biological. . . . Scientific though his purpose was, Frazer had the effect of validating those old modes of experiencing the world which modern men, beginning with the Romantics, have

R. Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*

sought to revive in order to escape from positivism and common sense.[3]

Other essays in this collection have considered the high-modernist use of *The Golden Bough*. I shall discuss a group of texts, all novels, which could ambivalently be categorised as modernist or post-modernist, which have in common an ironic or sceptical use of the idea, or the material, of Frazer's work, as a means of patterning their narratives. All of them are comic, though all are also serious social and spiritual explorations of the state of our lives. Some are more directly derived from *The Golden Bough* itself than others – all, probably, are at least as much concerned with responding to what I have called the high-modernist response to Frazer as with Frazer himself. Trilling in the essay I have quoted juxtaposes *The Golden Bough* with *Death in Venice*, *Beyond Tragedy* and Freud. Some of my chosen novels, again, are drawing on all these associations, rather than precisely on Frazer.

The texts I shall discuss are: Iris Murdoch's *A Severed Head*, *The Unicorn* and *The Good Apprentice*, Anthony Powell's *The Kindly Ones*, *Temporary Kings* and *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*, Muriel Spark's *The Takeover*, and Norman Mailer's, *Armies of the Night*.[4]

Iris Murdoch's reading of Freud is central to her stringent moral vision. Freud's reading of Frazer informs the thought and content of *Totem and Taboo*, and it is this work of Freud which, I think, particularly contributes to both the thought and the form of the drawing-room comedy *A Severed Head* and the Gothic romance *The Unicorn*.

There are three aspects of Freud's use of Frazer's work which are of particular interest in their relation to these novels. These are Freud's citation of Frazer on the true nature of forbidden acts, his discussion of magic as "omnipotence of thought" and his relation of obsessional neurosis to the taboos governing primitive kings.

In his essay "The Return of Totemism in Childhood" Freud makes a long and crucial quotation from Frazer in his discussion of the horror of incest. Frazer's arguments are, he says, "in essential agreement with the arguments which I put forward in my essay on taboo". He goes on to quote from *Totemism and Exogamy*:

> It is not easy to see why any deep human instinct should need to be reinforced by law. There is no law commanding men to eat and drink or forbidding them to put their hands in the fire. Men eat and drink and keep their hands out of the fire instinctively for fear of natural not legal penalties, which would be entailed by violence done to these instincts. The law only forbids men to do what their instincts incline them to do; what nature itself prohibits and punishes, it would be superfluous for the law to prohibit and punish. Accordingly we may always safely assume that crimes forbidden by law are crimes which many men have a natural propensity to commit. If there was no such propensity there would be no such crimes, and if no such crimes were committed what need to forbid them? Instead of assuming, therefore, from the legal prohibition of incest that there is a natural aversion to incest, we ought rather to assume that there is a natural instinct in favour of it, and that if the law represses it, as it represses other natural instincts, it does so because civilised men have come to the conclusion that the satisfaction of these natural instincts is detrimental to the general instincts of society.[5]

The tone of this passage sounds like that of Freud himself, reasonable, assuming a consensus, measured in argument. The point it makes about desire and law is central to Freud's formulation of his theory of the repression of instinctive desires and to his study of the Oedipus complex. Its opposition of civilised men and "deep human instincts" echoes Freud's concerns in his studies of civilisation and its discontents, and, in another tone, is part of the irony of the fiction studied in this essay.

In the earlier essay "Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence" Freud also drew on Frazer to illustrate the sources of the neuroses, specifically the obsessional neurosis, which characteristically presents itself in a series of "magical" rituals to avert harm to the self or others. His discussion ties together public and private behaviour. He has earlier described the protective rituals surrounding primitive kings, quoting extensively from Frazer; he goes on to relate these rituals to the ambivalent practices of the neurotic:

> The taboo does not only pick out the king and exalt him above all common mortals, it also makes his existence a torment and an intolerable burden and reduces him to a bondage far worse than that of his subjects. Here, then, we have an exact counterpart of the obsessional act in the neurosis, in which the suppressed impulse and the impulse that suppresses it find simultaneous and common

> satisfaction. The obsessional act is *ostensibly* a protection against the prohibited act, but *actually*, in our view, it is a repetition of it. The "ostensibly" applies to the *conscious* part of the mind, and the "actually" to the *unconscious* part. In exactly the same way, the ceremonial taboo of kings is *ostensibly* the highest honour and protection for them, while *actually* it is a punishment for their exaltation, a revenge taken on them by their subjects.[6]

Freud relates these ideas to his own discoveries: the fact that rulers attract "such a powerful unconscious element of hostility" is illuminated by "the child's complex of emotions towards his father – the father–complex". He expresses an interest in "more information on the early history of the kingship" and adds that "Frazer himself has put forward impressive reasons, though, as he himself admits, not wholly conclusive ones, for supposing that the earliest kings were foreigners who, after a brief reign, were sacrificed with solemn festivities as representatives of the deity.

I shall come back to these ideas, particularly in the context of *The Unicorn* and *Henderson the Rain King*. The third place where Frazer's influence on Freud's thought is of great importance seems to me to be the treatment of the concept of omnipotence of thought. In "Animism, Magic, Omnipotence of Thoughts" Freud quotes with approval Tylor's description of magic: "mistaking an ideal connection for a real one". He sets this beside Frazer's distinction between "imitative" and "contagious" magic, and points out that "the true explanation of all the folly of magical observances is the domination of the association of ideas". And again he cites Frazer: "Men mistook the order of their ideas for the order of nature, and hence imagined that the control which they have, or seem to have, over their thoughts, permitted them to exercise a corresponding control over things."[7]

Here again is a voice to compare to Auden's "rational voice", lamented in his elegy for Freud. Both doctor and anthropologist had a notion of what Iris Murdoch thinks of as the "hard idea of truth", an awareness of the limitations of mind, of the dangers of fantasy. Freud says, two pages later, "A general overvaluation has thus come about of all mental processes – an attitude towards the world, that is, which in view of our knowledge of the relations between reality and thought, cannot but strike us as an overvaluation of the latter."[8]

The phrase "omnipotence of thought", Freud goes on to tell us, was a coinage of his patient the Rat Man:

> He had coined the phrase as an explanation of all the strange and uncanny events by which he, like others afflicted with the same illness, seemed to be pursued. If he thought of someone, he would be sure to meet that very person immediately afterwards, as though by magic. If he suddenly asked after the health of an acquaintance whom he had not seen for a long time, he would hear that he had just died, so that it would look as though a telepathic message had arrived from him. If without any really serious intention he swore at some stranger, he might be sure that the man would die soon afterwards, so that he would feel responsible for his death. In the course of treatment he was himself able to tell me how the deceptive appearance arose in the midst of these cases, and by what contrivances he himself had helped to strengthen his own superstitious beliefs. All obsessional neurotics are superstitious in this way, usually against their better judgment.[9]

What struck me about this passage, when I reread it in the course of thinking about these novels, was how well the Rat Man's description of the coherent patterning of his experiences coincided with the uncanny, coincidental and magical quality of the plotting of both Murdoch and Powell (both of whom are also interested in magic itself). Traditional realism works with probabilities, correcting the melodramatic or fairy-tale expectations of romance. Later magical realists use the conventions of older genres to explore unconscious fantasy or psychic truth. Powell and Murdoch, and indeed Bellow, Spark and Mailer, have the realist's sense, akin to Freud's and Frazer's, that there is a hard reality, not ourselves, which is not amenable to our planning, plotting and power-strategies. But they are also *technically* interested, in ways made available by Freud and Frazer, in the uncanny patternings we pursue and perceive. A study of Freud's interest in primitive stories about the nature of things and its relation to the scientific study of neurosis is one way to understand the atmosphere of their narratives, at once magical and sceptical.

It is interesting, in this context, that Freud sees art as the only field in which the omnipotence of thought still pertains:

> In only a single field of our civilisation has the omnipotence of thoughts been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects – thanks to artistic illusion – just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of "the magic of art" and compare artists to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps

> more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art's sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct today. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes.[10]

One more quotation from the end of the essay "Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence" will lead us straight into the world of Iris Murdoch's novels, and to the centre of many of her preoccupying ideas:

> The neuroses exhibit on the one hand striking and far-reaching points of agreement with those great social institutions, art, religion and philosophy. But on the other hand they seem like distortions of them. It might be maintained that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art, that an obsessional neurosis is a caricature of a religion, and that a paranoic delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system.[11]

IRIS MURDOCH, *A SEVERED HEAD* AND *THE UNICORN*

[In what follows I shall to a certain extent recapitulate the argument of parts of my book *Degrees of Freedom* (1965), although with different emphases.]

A Severed Head might be called an anthropological drawing-room comedy, and *The Unicorn* an anthropological Gothic romance. Both are ambiguously patterned in ways that resemble Freud's description of the Rat Man's omnipotent thoughts and also in the way in which, like Freud's description of art as "omnipotence of thought", they offer a fantasy world of realised desires. Warwick Gould has remarked, in the seminar at which this paper was first read, on the way in which all Murdoch's novels have an atmosphere of "diffused sexuality", and I think that this is true at two levels. The subject of the novels is the relation between the public and the private, between morality and desire, between truth and fantasy. The sexualised atmosphere is partly to do with the nature of the novelist's own imagination and sense of pleasure and unpleasure, partly to do with a Platonic interest in Eros and the human desire for the Good, but partly also to do with a stringent and carefully thought out acceptance of Freud's account of human nature. In "On 'God' and 'Good'" Murdoch describes Freud's discovery which "might almost be called a doctrine of original sin".

> Freud takes a thoroughly pessimistic view of human nature. He sees the psyche as an egocentric system of quasi-mechanical energy, largely determined by its own individual history, whose natural attachments are sexual, ambiguous and hard for the subject to understand or control. Introspection reveals only the deep tissue of ambivalent motive, and fantasy is a stronger force than reason. Objectivity and unselfishness are not natural to human beings.[12]

The psychoanalyst in *A Severed Head*, the sinister and bland Palmer Anderson, has his own version of this mechanistic description:

> The psyche is a strange thing," he said, "and it has its own mysterious methods of restoring a balance. It automatically seeks its advantage, its consolation. It is almost entirely a matter of mechanics, and mechanical models are the best to understand it with." (p. 39)

This definition is offered at the end of the chapter in which Anderson has talked the novel's hero, Martin Lynch-Gibbon, into accepting Anderson's affair with Martin's wife, Antonia. "'We are civilised people,' said Palmer. 'We must try to be very lucid and very honest. We are civilised and intelligent people'." (p. 35).

Martin's name, Lynch-Gibbon, has often been interpreted as a gesture towards human origins, which it seems to wish to root out or obscure. Martin tries the "civilised" response, even bringing glasses of wine to the lovers in their bed. But this denial of his primitive feelings and passions is questioned by Palmer's half-sister, the anthropologist Honor Klein. In the quotations I have made from Freud and Frazer, the emphasis has been on the truthfulness of modern civilised man as opposed to the fantasy of the primitive. Honor Klein seems to suggest that the civilised behaviour desiderated by Anderson leads to fantasy and untruth as much as magic might.

> "Truth has been lost long ago in this situation," she said. "In such matters you cannot have both truth and what you call civilisation. You are a violent man, Mr Lynch-Gibbon. You cannot get away with this intimacy with your wife's seducer." (p. 81)

The anthropological imagery that runs through the novel reinforces this message. The image of the severed head itself is complex. Irish Murdoch has said it came from an interest in the Bog People. Martin's brother, Alexander, a sculptor who makes clay heads, specifically of Antonia,

refers to "Freud on Medusa. The head can represent the female genitals, feared, not desired" (p. 54). In her book on Sartre, Murdoch contrasted this Freudian interpretation with Sartre's use of the image to represent "our fear of being observed".[13] (Martin's illicit affair with Georgie depends for its magic on its secrecy.) The clay head Alexander is making, with its "damp grey featureless face" in its early stages, reminds Martin suddenly of the features of his mother under the sheet of her death-bed. (The female, feared and desired, of the incest taboo? Also the dead ancestor, ambivalently demon and beneficent spirit?)

The head is something to be questioned, an image of death and desire, connected to Orpheus and Medusa. But it has one very specific origin in *Totem and Taboo*, where Freud quotes Frazer on the placation of the dead:

> Other people have found a means for changing their former enemies after their death into guardians, friends and benefactors. This method lies in treating their severed heads with affection, as some of the savage races of Borneo boast of doing. When the Sea Dyaks of Sarawak bring home a head from a successful head-hunting expedition, for months after its arrival it is treated with the greatest consideration and addressed with all the names of endearment of which their language is capable. The most dainty morsels of food are thrust into its mouth, delicacies of all kinds and even cigars. The head is repeatedly implored to hate its former friends and to love its new hosts since it has now become one of them.[14]

There are obvious and comic parallels in this passage with the attempts by Palmer and Antonia to placate and domesticate Martin, after they have betrayed him.

In this context it is significant that the first vision of the anthropologist, Honor Klein, is in a fog in a railway station, of which Martin says, "It was the Inferno" and that, as Martin drives her back to Palmer and Antonia, he observes "Honor Klein's body sagged and jolted beside me like a headless sack." She has a strong, not entirely pleasant, physical presence, heavy and oily, down to earth, or below the earth. In a later scene she brandishes a Samurai sword and "decapitates" a thrown napkin. This use of the sword she connects with "a spiritual exercise", "not a trick". She begins to represent both the severing of the magically placated head Martin is to the lovers, the executioner who represents the hardness of moral truth, and indeed, "the female genitals, feared" but also desired, now. After Martin makes an instinctive violent attack on her in the cellar

of the house where Palmer and Antonia lie in bed like golden angels, he sees her like some underworld deity, her face black, her teeth white, the hair on her lip gleaming.

In the way of Murdoch heroes he falls suddenly and unpredictably in love with her, as though enchanted: "Her face was heavy and surly, like a face in a Spanish religious painting, something looking out of darkness, barbarous yet highly conscious". (p. 137). These contrasts are of her essence: physically solid, "religious", "looking out of darkness", "barbarous but highly conscious". In the world of Palmer and Antonia, Freud's vision of original sin has been domesticated, "civilised", trivialised. Honor, even in her name, introduces older forces, darker truths.

> "Being a Christian you connect spirit with love. These people [the Japanese] connect it with control, with power."
>
> "What do you connect it with?"
>
> She shrugged her shoulders. "I am a Jew."
>
> "But you believe in the dark gods," I said.
>
> "I believe in people," said Honor Klein. It was a rather unexpected reply. (p. 120)

The atmosphere of *A Severed Head* plays with riddling reversals of our ideas of the civilised and the primitive. Palmer is a Freudian scientist (or magician, but his words echo his author's analysis of Freud); Antonia is a descendant of Bloomsbury, who holds comfortable moral beliefs about the communion of souls which Martin describes as "a metaphysic of the drawing-room". Their civilised "morals" produce a kind of magical fantasy, whilst Honor Klein's infernal vision produces a kind of truth-telling. Yet one does not feel that Murdoch is expressing any Romantic nostalgia for pre-rational wholeness of the self, or for the "spilt religion" T. E. Hulme found in Romanticism.

Honor Klein, it is true, is invested with some of the magical attributes of kingship or priesthood. Throughout the novel Murdoch plays with the idea of taboo; various women at various times become "taboo" to Martin, and Honor Klein herself has the electric quality Freud attributes to taboo. This extends to her sword: "It was hideously sharp. My hand stopped. The blade felt as if it were charged with electricity and I had to let go" (p. 22). Compare Freud's quotation from Frazer's *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on taboo:

> Persons or things which are regarded as taboo may be compared to objects charged with electricity; they are the seat of a tremendous

> power which is transmissible by contact, and may be liberated with destructive effect if the organisms which provoke its discharge are too weak to resist it; the result of a violation of a taboo depends partly on the strength of the magical influence inherent in the taboo object or person, partly on the strength of the opposing *mana* of the violator of the taboo . . . .[15]

The way in which Martin Lynch-Gibbon acquires the strength of magical influence to stand up to Honor Klein is by observing her in bed with her brother, and thus becoming involved in the violation of the incest taboo. Honor Klein refers him to the myth of Gyges and Candaules, in which the invited voyeur of the king's love-making is ordered by the queen to choose death, which will close his eyes which have seen the forbidden thing, or to kill the king and replace him. This story in its turn is related to Frazer's accounts of the killing of kings, as well as to his accounts of the taboos placed on them by their subjects for their "protection".

If part of Honor's power is her violation of the incest taboo, which Martin gains power over, how can that mixture of myth, magic and primitive fear and desire work in a novel of this kind? It does not work in the same way in which, say, the appearance of the Eumenides works (if it does work) in *The Family Reunion*. Eliot felt that the myths of dying gods hinted at truths deeper than modern positive rationality, and came to believe that the religious sense of the community, the power of the old myths, was related to truth, that the Christian myth was a truth. What Harry sees are the dark gods unacknowledged by drawing-room comfortable morals and rationality. What Honor Klein represents is those dark forces and those uncomfortable truths, but the novel, in its powerfully elegant comic self-consciousness, recognises certain tough psychic forces, gives them deliberated symbolic form, and does not give in to the world of magic or to the absolutes of religious belief. As I said, it is *sceptical*. Like Honor Klein, it does not claim *belief* in the dark gods; it is interested in people. And, post-Freud and post-Eliot, it knows that people are made up of conflicting systems of drives and values and images, and makes one possible pattern of these.

The Unicorn makes another. If *A Severed Head* uses Frazer and Freud to analyse civilisation and desire, *The Unicorn* is concerned with religion, with the spiritual life and the fantasies which parody the spiritual life. (It is also concerned with many other things that are not the concern of this essay, including Platonism and the Gothic vampires of Sheridan Le Fanu and Ireland.)

In "On 'God' and 'Good'", later than the discussion of the Freudian "machinery", Iris Murdoch writes about the necessity of clear and steady attention and remarks,

> A chief enemy to such clarity of vision, whether in art or morals, is the system to which the technical name of sado-masochism has been given. It is the peculiar subtlety of this system that, while constantly leading attention and energy back into the self, it can produce, almost all the way as it were to the summit, plausible imitations of what is good. Refined sado-masochism can ruin art which is too good to be ruined by the cruder vulgarities of self-indulgence. . . . Fascinating too is the alleged relation of master to slave, of the good self to the bad self . . . .[16]

The plot of *The Unicorn* is a kind of knowing fairy-tale which examines a kind of semi-religious community in terms both of this ambiguity between sado-masochism and virtuous renunciation, and of Frazer's account of the imprisonment and restrictive rituals surrounding primitive kings, as interpreted by Freud.

The central figure of the story is Hannah Crean-Smith. Her name, it has been pointed out, is an anagram of Christ-Name, and in that capacity she is both the dying god and the sacrificial victim. She has married a very close relation, committed adultery and attempted murder of her husband, who survives, off-stage, terribly mutilated, a vindictive enchanter-figure, who is to return after seven years have elapsed.

Hannah is confined to Gaze Castle by some mysterious internal or external compulsion. The name "Gaze" suggests religious contemplation, and there is the suggestion that she is a figure of expiatory suffering and renunciation who will somehow "redeem" the court of anxious servants and lovers who surround her with their attention and reinforce her immobility. The plot opens with the arrival of Marian, the governess whose job turns out to be simply to be a companion for Hannah – Marian is "Maid Marian" and the arrival of this virgin alludes to the legend of the trapping of the unicorn by a pure virgin, which has been seen as an allegory of Christ and the soul, but has more ambiguous sexual connotations. Marian initially sees Hannah as "something very slightly unkempt, the hair tousled, the finger-nails not quite clean, the lovely face a little tired, a little sallow and greasy, like that of a person long ill". Marian is first repelled and then judges that "this person is harmless" (p. 30), which turns out not to be the case.

Hannah has her worshippers: the philosopher Max, in his house Riders,

and his son, her ex-lover; Effingham, a visiting civil servant, the courtly lover *par excellence*; Denis, the servant; the unpleasant Evercreeches; and Gerald Scottow, ex-lover of Peter, a violent wielder of power. Their worship, in which Marian becomes involved, is worked out in terms of the idea of kingship which is central to the argument of *The Golden Bough*. Frazer writes, and Freud quotes him at length,

> The idea that early kingdoms are despotisms in which the people exist only for the sovereign, is wholly inapplicable to the monarchies we are considering. On the contrary, the sovereign in them exists only for his subjects; his life is only valuable so long as he discharges the duties of his position by ordering the course of nature for his people's benefit. So soon as he fails to do so, the care, the devotion, the religious homage which they had hitherto lavished on him cease and are changed into hatred and contempt; he is dismissed ignominiously, and may be thankful if he escapes with his life. Worshipped as a god one day he is killed as a criminal the next. But in this changed behaviour of the people there is nothing capricious or inconstant. On the contrary, their conduct is entirely of a piece. If their king is their god he should also be their preserver; and if he will not preserve them, he must make room for another who will. So long, however, as he answers their expectations, there is no limit to the care which they take of him, and which they compel him to take of himself. A king of this sort lives hedged in by a ceremonious etiquette, a network of prohibitions and observances, of which the intention is not to contribute to his dignity, much less to his comfort, but to restrain him from conduct which, by disturbing the harmony of nature, might involve himself, his people, and the universe in one common catastrophe. Far from adding to his comfort, these observances, by trammelling his every act, annihilate his freedom, and often render the very life, which it is their object to preserve, a burden and sorrow to him.[17]

There is a telling little scene early in the novel in which Denis Nolan, the servant who at the end of the tale seems to have taken the burden of the suffering upon himself, is seen clipping Hannah's hair, though Marian would have thought him ill-enough fitted to the role of *valet de chambre*. He tidies away and burns the clippings in a way which reminds us irresistibly of Freud's quotations from Frazer about the sacredness of the parts of the body of holy rulers.[18] Immediately after the passage I have just quoted from Freud, he goes on to quote Frazer, who was quoting Kaempfer, on the sacred person of the Mikado:

> There is such a holiness ascribed to all parts of his body that he dares to cut off neither his hair nor his beard nor his nails. However, lest he should grow too dirty, they may clean him in the night when he is asleep; because, they say, that which is taken from his body at that time hath been stolen from him and that such a theft does not prejudice human dignity.

Denis's ministrations emphasise both Hannah's sacredness and her immobility and helplessness. He tidies away the clippings and burns them. Frazer, in his section on the tabooing of hair, all of which is illuminating, says,

> It is obvious that the cutting of the hair must have been a delicate and difficult operation. There is first the danger of disturbing the spirit of the head. . . . Secondly there is the difficulty of disposing of the shorn locks. For the savage believes that the sympathetic connexion which exists between himself and every part of his body continues to exist even after the physical connexion has been broken, and that therefore he will suffer from any harm that may befall the severed parts of his body, such as the clippings of his hair or the parings of his nails. Accordingly he takes great care that these severed portions of himself shall not be left in places where they might either be exposed to accidental injury or fall into the hands of malicious persons who might work magic on them to his detriment or death. Such dangers are common to all, but sacred persons have more to fear from them than ordinary people . . . .[19]

And elsewhere he records that the ministrant who cuts the hair is also tabooed;[20] Denis is the priest who will inherit the kingship.

In the same scene Hannah is brought a bat by Denis, a damaged bat that will probably die, and which is in some way her totem animal: "Without knowing why, [Marian] felt she could hardly bear Mrs Crean-Smith and the bat together, as if they were suddenly the same grotesque helpless thing" (p. 48). The bat, of course, also goes with the Gothic image of Hannah as vampire, Le Fanu's Carmilla, and Murdoch makes it both intensely alive, with its "strange little doggy face and bright dark eyes" and sinister, by implication. The novel as a whole is haunted by totemic animals. One character submerges herself in a pool like a seal; another is always accompanied by gun dogs. Denis is associated with fish, thus connecting him too with Christ and suffering. He protects goldfish from herons, and explains to Marian the meaning of the leaping

salmon, of which Hannah has already said, "Such fantastic bravery, to enter another element like that. Like souls approaching God." Denis shows Marian the salmon and says, "Suffering is no scandal. It is natural. Nature appoints it. All creation suffers. It suffers from having been created, if nothing else. It suffers from being divided from God" (p. 235).

Here a primitive totemic world is associated with a highly developed religious explanation of suffering. *The Unicorn*, like most of Murdoch's novels, but more intensely than most of them, is about the possibility and nature of the spiritual life, in a post- or un-Christian world. In that sense its use of the discoveries of Frazer and Freud might be thought to connect Murdoch's work to Trilling's description, quoted earlier, of Frazer's making "all faith and all ritual indigenous to the world . . . indeed almost biological", and also his contribution to the "old modes of thinking which modern men, beginning with the Romantics, have sought to revive".

But, again, there is a powerful element of scepticism and irony built into this mythic vision of the Princess in the Tower, the contemplative in her cell, the primitive ties between the community and the natural and spiritual worlds. For the Freudian implications of Frazer's narratives are insisted on and made clear. Hannah's suffering may be simply a sado-masochistic parody of virtue. It may too be an obsessional neurosis, "a caricature of a religion", and the behaviour of the worshippers carries a powerful charge of the ambivalence that Freud detects in their protectiveness. This ambivalence is frequently explored in Murdoch, starting with the pity of the Enchanter, Mischa Fox, for maimed and destroyed insect life. The desire to protect, Freud says, in obsessional neurotics

> appears wherever, in addition to a predominant feeling of affection, there is also a contrary, but unconscious current of hostility. . . . The hostility is then shouted down, as it were, by an excessive intensification of the affection, which is expressed as solicitude and becomes compulsive, because it might otherwise be inadequate to perform its task of keeping the unconscious contrary current of feeling under repression . . . .[21]

When Hannah is subdued and seduced by Gerald Scottow (i.e. when the taboo of inviolability is broken) her worshippers feel free to gratify their own desires – Marian for instance makes love to Denis. As Freud says, "If one person succeeds in satisfying the repressed desire, the same desire is bound to be kindled in all the other members of the

community."[22] And, when Hannah kills Scottow, she herself becomes vulnerable, dies and is succeeded by Denis, who takes on himself the crime of killing the enchanter, or power-centre, Peter, on his return. He loses his innocence and goes away.

> Marian had an eerie sense of it all beginning again, the whole tangled business: the violence, the prison house, the guilt. It all still existed. Yet Denis was taking it away with him. He had wound it all inside himself and was taking it away. Perhaps he was bringing it, for her, for the others, to an end. (p. 311)

In Denis's departure, and the new beginning of violence and guilt, we may perhaps see an echo of Frazer's repeated tragedy as one priest takes over in the grove of Nemi from his murdered predecessor, as well as a Christian allegory of scapegoat and suffering.

This account of *The Unicorn* leaves out the Platonic vision of truth and religion, introduced by Max, and leaves out also the relation of the story to Simone Weil's ideas of necessary suffering. It is a complex work of art, juxtaposing and mixing various genres and theoretical accounts of human nature into a tragi-comic vision which has some dignity.

A constantly reiterated idea of Murdoch's is that "the spiritual life has no story and is not tragic" – a saying of the Abbess in *The Bell*. This idea is related to the willingness to experience, to attend to life, without imposing patterns or stories upon it. In *The Unicorn* Effingham Cooper's "intelligent" girlfriend Elizabeth, who never appears, says, "Art and psychoanalysis give shape and meaning to life and that is why we adore them, but life as it is lived has no shape and meaning and that is what I am experiencing just now" (p. 120). We are reminded of the idea of "omnipotence of thought" – and here psychoanalysis is ironically, by implication, assimilated to art and indeed magic in that category.

The problem of death, Freud tells us, in his discussion of the origins of animism, "must have been . . . the chief starting-point of all this theorizing".[23] What readers have generally seen as the most startling and memorable scene in *The Unicorn* is the one where Effingham, *l'homme moyen sensuel*, finds himself trapped in a bog, and on the point of death. He has a vision of nothing, of annihilation.

> The dark bog seemed empty now, utterly empty, as if, because of the great mystery that was about to be enacted, the little wicked gods had withdrawn. Even the stars were veiled now and Effingham was at the centre of a black globe. . . .

> Perhaps he was dead already, the darkening image of the self forever removed. . . . What was left was everything else, all that was not himself, that object which he had never before seen and upon which he now gazed with the passion of a lover. And indeed he could always have known this for the fact of death stretches the length of life. Since he was mortal he was nothing and since he was nothing all that was not himself was filled to the brim with being and it was from this that the light streamed. This then was love, to look and look until one exists no more, *this* was the love which was the same as death . . . . (pp. 197ff)

This vision, with its combination of the words "gaze", "passion" and "love", is the true vision of which Hannah's story is the (so to speak) animistic theorising. At the moment of death the acceptance of annihilation brings a sense of the reality of things, undeformed (to use another Murdoch word) by human fantasy. I cite it now because it provides the example of the experience of death and reality as one, which occurs, in a remarkably similar form, at the end of *Henderson the Rain King*. It is a spiritual denial of human stories constructed to avoid or evade meaninglessness.

ANTHONY POWELL, *A DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF TIME*

"It is quite possible," says Freud,

> that the whole concept of demons was derived from the important relation of the living to the dead. The ambivalence inherent in that relation was expressed in the subsequent course of human development by the fact that, from the same root, it gave rise to two completely opposed psychical structures: on the one hand fear of demons and ghosts and on the other veneration of ancestors. The fact that demons are always regarded as the spirits of those who have died *recently* shows better than anything the influence of mourning on the origin of the belief in demons. Mourning has a quite specific psychical task to perform; its function is to detach the survivors' memories and hopes from the dead. When this has been achieved the pain grows less and with it the remorse and self-reproaches and consequently the fear of the demon as well. And the same spirits who to begin with were feared as demons may now expect to meet with friendlier treatment; they are revered as ancestors and appeals are made to them for help.[24]

Anthony Powell's long novel is claimed, impeccably, as part of the English tradition of observed social comedy. It is even disliked on these grounds by readers hostile to jokiness and the upper classes and Brideshead sentimentality, which is a pity, because it seems to me in the subtlety of its construction, the way in which its episodes are juxtaposed and set up echoes along the whole work, the way in which its characters are both smaller (simpler) and larger than life, to be also an English version of the self-aware modernist novel, working with cutting and patterning rather than with distortions of consciousness or dislocating shifts of point of view.

At various points in the novel Powell, or his characters, explain that "naturalism" is a technique, like any other, no more and no less artificial, requiring skill in selection and writing. There is an essay to be written in this context about the choice of *length* of the episodes in the various novels, and the relation of selected scenes and dialogues to the reflections on life, art, and history made by the narrator and the persons of the narrative – generals, artists, musicians, spivs and prophetesses. This is not the place for that essay. What I have to say about Powell's use of *The Golden Bough* and related ideas is to do with the sense of deliberate patterning in the narrative. It is also to do with ancestors. As the novel progresses and the narrator, Nicholas Jenkins grows older, both the past and the present become fuller of both demons and ancestors, and, with the war, of numbers of the dead. In a later novel, *The Fisher King*, Powell wrote an almost hieratically allegorical tale of an impotent photographer who loses his beautiful princess of a companion to a "poor knight"; the whole is interpreted in terms of the Arthurian myth by a chorus consisting of a best-selling historical novelist and a man in advertising. The matter of that tale is out of *From Ritual to Romance* and *Parsifal*, rather than Frazer, and the manner is schematic rather than "naturalistic" in so far as it is successful, which it is, I think, as a grimly mythic study of impotence and age. I mention it here because it reinforces the sense that Powell's work is naturally haunted by the atmosphere of *The Waste Land*, and by what Eliot claimed came from Frazer.

The title of *Temporary Kings*, the eleventh and penultimate volume of *A Dance to the Music of Time*, is taken from Frazer (it is the title of chapter xxv in the abridged *Golden Bough*). In a long novel about the passage and repetitions of time, the word "temporary" has its resonance and irony. But, before considering that book, I want to look briefly at an earlier one, *The Kindly Ones*, which also has echoes of Eliot and the matter of ancestors and demons. This novel, published in 1962, is the

last in the second peacetime trilogy, and ends with the outbreak of the Second World War. It is thus a kind of Janus herm in the text, looking back and forward. It opens, not chronologically, but in the narrator's childhood in a military household at the outbreak of the First World War.[25] The household contains a housemaid who sees the "ghosts", is disappointed in love, and appears stark naked in the drawing-room, "instantly metamorphosed" by Nick's mother description of this as "the end of the world", into "one of those figures – risen from the tomb, given up by the sea, swept in from the ends of the earth – depicted in primitive paintings of the Day of Judgment" (p. 62). These portents are juxtaposed with a childish confusion of Nick's between the suffragettes (referred to as Virgin Marys by Albert, the cooking footman) and the Furies: "At lessons that morning – the subject classical mythology – Miss Orchard had spoken of the manner in which the Greeks, because they so greatly feared the Furies, had named them the Eumenides – the Kindly Ones – flattery intended to appease their terrible wrath" (p. 6).

The double nature of the Eumenides, the pursuing ghosts of the *Oresteia* and *The Family Reunion*, as demons and domesticated household gods is close to Freud's description of the primitive attitude to the dead. In terms of the First World War it is worth remarking that Nick's father was involved in the making of the Treaty of Versailles, which led inexorably to the Second. In terms of the relation of the ideas of magic and ritual to the structure of the novel, it is worth remarking that this reminiscent passage in 1914 sees the first appearance of Dr Trelawney, who

> conducted a centre for his own peculiar religious, philosophical, – some said magical – tenets, a cult of which he was high priest, if not actually messiah. This establishment was one of those fairly common strongholds of unsorted ideas that played such a part in the decade ended by the war. Simple-lifers, utopian socialists, spiritualists, occultists, theosophists, quietists, pacifists, futurists, cubists, zealots of all sorts in their approach to life and art . . . a collection of visionaries who hoped to build a New Heaven and a New Earth through the agency of their particular crackpot activities, sinister or comic, according to the way you looked at such things. (p. 32)

Dr Trelawney and his disciples go out for spiritual runs, he "in a short white robe or tunic, his long silky beard and equally long hair caught by the breeze".

Sinister or comic, Dr Trelawney reappears at various points in the

narrative, like Mrs Erdleigh, the fortune-teller who calls up associations both of Madame Sosostris and of Wagner's prophetic Erda, and who also manages to call up, in *The Acceptance World*, the spirit of Karl Màrx on *planchette*. Both preside over the fate of Nick's wandering Uncle Giles, whose death in a hotel run by Albert precedes the Second World War, and whose presence continues as an ambivalent ghost, present and absent, as such relations can, in the narrative of a novel, or in the memory. Nick, seeing to his dead uncle's effects, has to help Trelawney, now decidedly sinister, with an asthma attack, assisted by Dupont, his supplanter in the affections of his first love, Jean. Trelawney is a fake priest, not without power. Nick says, "There was something decidedly unpleasant about him, sinister, at the same time absurd, that combination of the ludicrous and the alarming soon to be widely experienced by contact with those set in authority in wartime" (p. 192).

This quotation is illuminating about Powell's method; the "real world" is shown to be infected by the attributes of the magical or charlatan, which reason can diagnose but not control. Widmerpool is of course "set in authority" during the war, and is indeed both ludicrous and alarming, coldly causing the death of Charles Stringham, now a saintly mess waiter: at the beginning of the sequence it was Stringham the glamorous and witty Etonian who mocked the ungainly Widmerpool and said he would be "the death of me".

Widmerpool marries Pamela, Stringham's niece, who is not kindly and deals out death. *Temporary Kings* opens in Venice, with a parody of the scene in *Death in Venice* where a very old singer (in the Mann story a persona of the destroying Dionysos) sings of the funicular and the kingdoms of the earth, and the characters of the novel discourse of death and the fear of death. "I feel like the man in the ghost story, scrambling over the breakwaters with the Horrible Thing behind him getting closer and closer" (p. 3). The language is full of comic echoes of Eliot's echo of Marvell's "At my back I always hear/Time's winged chariot hurrying near".

Nick is at a literary conference. Mark Members has talked him into attending.

"You'll live like a king when you get there."

"One of those temporary kings in *The Golden Bough*, everything at their disposal for a year or a month or a day – then execution? Death in Venice?"

"Only ritual execution in more enlightened times – the image of a declining virility. A Mann's man for a' that. . . ." (p. 7)

A further twist in this sinister imagery is given by the visit of the conference guests to a palazzo with a Tiepolo ceiling depicting the myth of Gyges and Candaules, already discussed in terms of the sexual supplanting (and killing) of the king in *A Severed Head*. A Dr Brightman adds to the story of the supplanting of Candaules the legend that Gyges descended under the earth and found a man in a hollow bronze horse. "The Hollow Horse, you remember, is a widespread symbol of Death and Rebirth" (p. 87). The story has repercussions in Powell's narrative; it is darkly suggested that Widmerpool, the indefatigable seeker after power, is impotent and gets his pleasure from what Pamela Widmerpool, who appears in this scene, calls "watching – looking on, being looked at".

(It is later revealed that Pamela Widmerpool, who comes into the story fresh from that scandalous death of the French writer Ferrand-Seneschal, in her arms, has in fact been making love to him partly for the conniving benefit of Widmerpool, who was looking on.)

It is in that scene too that Pamela Widmerpool meets Russell Gwinnett (named with one of the names of the morbidly witty Ambrose Bierce, death-obsessed), who wishes to write a life of X. Trapnel, the writer who died as a result of his affair with Pamela, and whose death and "apotheosis" in the Hero of Acre, a Fitzrovia pub, are recounted by Malcolm Crowding just before the scene under the painting. Both the account of Trapnel's death and the scene in the palazzo resound with echoes of Frazer's dying gods and slaughtered kings.

> It was Lazarus coming back from the Dead. Better than that, because Lazarus didn't buy everybody a drink . . . .
>
> The charnel cave was put behind him. It was Trapnel Unbound. (p. 31)

At closing time

> X walked through the doors of the Hero like a king. There was real dignity in his stride. It was a royal progress. Courtiers followed in his wake. You can imagine – free drinks – there was quite a crowd by that time, some of them singing, as it might be, chants in a patron's praise. (p. 33)

Trapnel finds that he has lost his stick – a stick with a death's head, that we know to be a swordstick. This loss of power – Pamela has already destroyed his novel – kills him:

"No," he said, "Of course I haven't got a stick any longer, have I? I sacrificed it. Nor a bloody novel. I haven't got that either."

Then he heeled over into the gutter. Everyone thought he was drunk. (p. 34)

There are echoes here of Frazer's descriptions of the celebratory mourners in the rituals of Dionysos and Adonis. There are further echoes in the scene in the palazzo, where Gwinnett, who is seen partly in terms of a dead ancestor, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, meets the terrifying Pamela, and makes a "frontal attack" declaring his interest in Trapnel. Pamela responds, "Poor X", and sounds "deeply moved".

> Now, it had become Trapnel's turn to join the dynasty of Pamela's dead lovers. Emotional warmth in her was directed only towards the dead, men who had played some part in her life, but were no more there to do so. That was how it looked. The first time we had ever talked together, she had described herself as "close" to her uncle, Charles Stringham, almost suggesting a sexual relationship. . . .
>
> It was Death she liked. Mrs Erdleigh had hinted as much on the night of the flying bombs. Would Gwinnett be able to offer her Death?" (p. 102)

Here Pamela is almost the goddess of the sacred grove, demanding successive sacrifices, the huntress. It is interesting that Stringham, Widmerpool's deposed victim, appears here both as ancestor and (incestuous) lover in the dynasty of the deposed and sacrificed. Dr Brightman links Pamela's remarks about the need to be looked at to this aspect of things:

> You mean one facet of the legend [of Gyges] links up with kingship in another guise? I agree. Sacrifice is almost implied. Public manifestation of himself as source of fertility might be required too, to forestall a successor from snatching the attribute of regality.

Pamela characterised Candaules as "the naked man with the stand". Trapnel lost his attribute of regality, the stick without which he was never seen.

Gwinnett is attempting to make contact with Trapnel. His profession gives him a professional concern with the life of the dead; his temperament, too. Later in Venice he begins to take on certain aspects of Aeneas.

> Gwinnett had certainly entered the true Trapnel world in a manner no aspiring biographer could discount. It was like a supernatural story, a myth. If he wanted to avoid becoming the victim of sorcery, being himself turned into a toad, something of that kind – in moral terms his dissertation follow *Profile in String* into the waters of the Styx – he would have to find the magic talisman and do that pretty quickly. (p. 174)

He pursues Pamela, by now a personification of Death in Venice, through the Venetian midnight.

Gwinnett at the realistic level has the idea of "reconstructing in himself Trapnel's life, getting into Trapnel's skin, 'becoming' Trapnel". This project, the biographer as conjurer of the dead, leads to him living in Trapnel's old rooms, where he is visited at midnight by a naked woman; she is comically and frighteningly observed by an old man, Bagshaw senior, going out to relieve himself. It is Christmas. Bagshaw tells Nick, "My father enacted the whole extraordinary incident under a sprig of mistletoe. In the middle of it all, some of the holly came down, with that extraordinary scratchy noise holly makes" (p. 191). The symbol is naturalised and embedded in the comic and the mundane, but the mistletoe is Frazer's mistletoe, the Golden Bough, and the woman, who is Pamela, is inviting Gwinnett into the Underworld. Her final act is to take an overdose and offer herself to Gwinnett, thus allowing him to "become" Trapnel as Gyges became Candaules, and enabling Pamela to "make the sacrifice of herself. Her act could only be looked upon as a sacrifice – of herself, to herself".

It seems to me important that the account of Stringham's "good death" in the camps in Singapore is delayed until this book, and appears in the middle of Pamela's tormenting progress to the Underworld, with its humiliation of Widmerpool. Stringham is the displaced and avenged ancestor. It is also important that Mrs Erdleigh prophesies her descent to her, in portentously bathetic terms that are also impressive. Pamela the sorceress is a joke and deadly serious.

The last book of the sequence, *Hearing Secret Harmonies*, published in 1975, deals with that time we think of as "the sixties", though it extended well into the seventies – the time of hippies and hobbits, of astrology and cults and gurus, of drugs and more sinister and threatening phenomena. It brings to an end the long journey of Widmerpool, first glimpsed on his solitary runs at Eton, famous for his overcoat, which was obscurely wrong. He has become a figure of political power, and ends in a search for quite different power, in a cult run by the unpleasant Scorpio

Murtlock, who has taken over Dr Trelawney's running-rites, and claims to be resurrecting and restoring that sage. Widmerpool and Professor Gwinnett, pursuing other researches with his usual thoroughness, take part in unpleasant rites and dances round the "Devil's Fingers". Nick, a cool observer of this new crop of primitivism, as he was of Trelawney's version, observes,

> It was not quite the scene portrayed by Poussin, even if elements of the Seasons' dance were suggested in a perverted form; not least by Widmerpool, perhaps naked, doing the recording. From what Gwinnett had said, a battle of wills seemed to be in progress. If, having decided material things were vain, Widmerpool had turned to the harnessing of quite other forces, it looked as if he were losing ground in rivalry with a younger man. (p. 173)

The images Powell draws on in the descriptions of this last stage of Widmerpool's progress are in fact those of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, rather than *The Golden Bough*. The fertility magic is generalised, and, when Widmerpool dies, in an attempt to outrun Murtlock in a naked magical run, his death is part of the whole history of his bizarre and monstrous competitiveness. Yet he is trying to be King of the Woods, and he is attempting to make his thought omnipotent in a recalcitrant world. Bithel, the army buffoon, now the Fool who survives, tells the last tale.

> "Somebody heard Lord Widmerpool shout, 'I'm leading, I'm leading you.'"
>
> "How did it end?"
>
> "It was rather a twisty way through the woods. Nobody could see him, especially in the mist. When they came round a corner, out of the trees, he was lying just in the road." (p. 269)

Widmerpool dies in an attempt to make time run faster, having never understood the cyclical graceful dance of the Poussin painting that gives its name to the sequence. His fate is informed and illuminated by the atmosphere spread by Frazer's studies and images throughout the modern period. As with Iris Murdoch, the use of the myths and the magic is partly comic, partly sceptical, partly almost elegant imagery for darker truths that in, say, Conrad or Lawrence would have been urgent with blood and darkness. But at the same time such references do connect readers to ancestors and demons, whatever their ambiguous provenance.

They do, still, provide a way for forming our stories of mystery and the fact of death.

SAUL BELLOW, *HENDERSON THE RAIN KING*

Henderson the Rain King was first published in 1959, before the sixties explosion of interest in the irrational and the primitive; its primitivism is related to the mythopoeic ambitions of high modernism, and it is also, it seems to me, a daring and successful attempt to challenge *Moby Dick* as the great American myth of travel and spiritual exploration. That said, it must immediately be remarked that it is also a comic and ironic novel, asking neither for belief in its narrative, which offers itself as "mental travel" (quite aware of the echoes of Blake this phrase calls up) and does not ask for assent to its central myth, either. It is self-conscious, and self-consciously patterned, in a way quite different from Melville's giddy and compelled discovery of Emersonian correspondences and natural emblems of spiritual riddles.

Henderson is a great novel, and what makes it great, paradoxically after what I have said, is the brilliance and sensuous immediacy of its physical world, and the voice of its hero and narrator, pugnacious, grumbling, tormented, comic, explosive, humiliated, but always questing, always energetic. Saul Bellow was a student of anthropology, and his novel is an anthropologist's novel, though critics are more likely to talk about it in terms of his interest in Reichian psychology.

Henderson escapes a civilisation with which he is at odds, and becomes a kind of tourist in search of spiritual comfort. He wishes to satisfy an inner voice which cries, "I want, I want." He goes into the interior of Africa in search of some ultimate truth, and finds two tribes, the gentle Arnewi, with a hugely fleshy female ruler, and the Wariri, whose king, Dahfu, becomes his friend. The Arnewi make him welcome, offer him a bride-price to marry the queen's sister, and are plagued by frogs in their water cistern. Henderson offers his personal version of American aid to the Arnewi, and explodes their tank and the frogs with a home-made bomb. Moving on to the Wariri, he finds a more prosperous and extremely unpleasant society, which believes in its own luck, with reason, and survives on a philosophy of delivering blows. There are street executions; Henderson finds a dead man in his hut; he is tricked into using his huge strength in a rain-making ceremony, where he moves the effigy of the goddess Mummah, and becomes the Sungo, the Rain King. He takes part in a frenzied dance, whipping the gods to make them produce rain,

which they do.

The king, Dahfu, is a powerful and beautiful man, living at ease in his harem, but surrounded with the restrictions already discussed in connection with Hannah in *The Unicorn.* He will be strangled when he can no longer satisfy his wives, he tells Henderson. He dances with the skull of his father, which he must not let fall; his father's spirit has become a maggot and then a lion, which the king must kill in a hunting-ceremony which is a proof of strength. He keeps a lioness in his cellar, learning her ways, "becoming" a lion, which annoys the witch-doctors, and helps them to plot his downfall. He is killed by a lion, setting out to trap his father, and reveals to Henderson that Henderson has been tricked into becoming the Rain King by being made to take on a show of strength which the wise men in the tribe avoid. For the Sungo is heir to the kingship, if there is no direct heir. He will inherit the wives, the restrictions, the dangerous rites and the eventual death. Henderson escapes, using his strength, and takes with him the lion cub provided by the witch-doctor to hold the soul of his dead friend.

The relations between this crude account of the plot and the world of Frazer's research are obvious. The king who will be strangled when he fails to satisfy his wives, the stranger who may be substituted for the king as sacrificial victim, the rulers who make rain and are vulnerable to destruction by their people if they fail, the animistic explanation of what happens to the soul of the dead ancestor, the reluctance of the people to take on the kingship are all to be found amply recorded in Frazer, though no doubt not only in Frazer. Poor Henderson is, like Gwinnett and Widmerpool, a Temporary King.

A quotation from *The Golden Bough* may illustrate the general affinity between the rain-making in *Henderson* and Frazer's observations:

> Sometimes, when a drought has lasted a long time, people drop the usual hocus-pocus of imitative magic altogether, and being far too angry to waste their breath in prayer, they seek by threats and curses or even downright physical force to extort the waters of heaven from the supernatural being who has, so to say, cut them off at the main. In a Japanese village, when the guardian divinity had long been deaf to the peasant's prayer for rain, they at last threw down his image and, with curses loud and long, hurled it head foremost into a stinking rice-field. "There", they said, "you may stay yourself for a while, to see how *you* feel after a few days scorching in this broiling sun that is burning the life from our cracking fields." In the like circumstances

the Feloupes of Senegambia cast down their fetishes and drag them about the fields, cursing them till rain falls.[26]

And now I wanted to fall on the ground to avoid any share in what seemed to me a terrible thing, for these women, the amazons, were rushing upon the figures for the gods with those short whips of theirs and striking them. "Stop!" I yelled. "Quit it! What's the matter? Are you crazy?" It would have been different perhaps, if this had been a token whipping and the gods were merely touched with the thick leather straps. But great violence was loosed on these figures, so that the smaller ones rocked as they were beaten while the bigger without any change of face bore it defenseless. Those children of darkness, the tribe, rose and screamed like gulls on stormy water. Naked, I threw myself down, roaring, "no, no, no!" . . . My hand, which had the whip still in it, was lifted once or twice and brought down so that against my will I was made to perform the duty of the rain king. . . .

And then after a great neighing, cold blast of wind, the clouds opened and the rain began to fall. Gouts of water like hand grenades burst all about and on me. The face of Mummah, which had been streaked by the whips, was now covered with silver bubbles and the ground began to foam. The amazons with their wet bodies began to embrace me. (*Henderson*, p. 201)

If Frazer's passage is mocking and detached, Bellow's is alive and complex. The magic works. The prose is about the effectiveness of violent blows (note the hand grenades).

To what use is Bellow putting all this material? He has many purposes in this novel, all of which are inextricably part of each other. One is, like Iris Murdoch in *A Severed Head*, but also like Melville in *Moby Dick*, to reflect ironically on the concepts of a civilisation and savagery. The *Pequod* is among other things a symbol of American savagery, going out into the world of nature to slaughter and destroy. Its most civilised and heroic passenger is the cannibal, Queequeg, Ishmael's friend, who has filed teeth and is tattooed with a theory of the universe. Henderson, capitalist and tourist, is a descendant of Ishmael, and like other American heroes finds his black counterpart, a man much better educated and more urbane than himself, sitting in his silk trousers and servicing his wives. What Dahfu teaches Henderson, above all, is the "connection between truth and blows".

> "Last winter as I was chopping wood a piece flew up from the block and broke my nose. So the first thing I thought was *truth*!"
>
> "Ah," said the king, ". . . As things are such may appear to be the case. I do not believe actually it is so. But I feel there is a law of human nature in which force is concerned. Man is a creature who cannot stand still under blows. . . . All wish to rid themselves and cast the blow upon the others. And this I conceive of as the earthly dominion. But as for the truth content of the force, that is a separate matter."
>
> The room was all shadow but the heat with its odor of vegetable combustion pervaded the air.
>
> "Wait a minute now, sire," I said, having frowned and bitten on my lips. "Let me see if I have got you straight. You say the soul will die if it can't make someone else suffer what it suffers?"
>
> "For a while, I am sorry to say, then it feels peace and joy."
>
> I lifted up by brows and with difficulty, as the whiplashes all over the unprotected parts of my face were atrocious. I gave him one of my high looks, from one eye. "You are sorry to say, Your Highness? Is this why me and the gods had to be beaten?"
>
> "Well, Henderson, I should have notified you better when you wished to move Mummah. To that extent you are right." (pp. 212–13)

I have quoted so much partly to give the sense of the comic contrast between the tone of the king and that of the tourist, though the content of the exchange is of great importance, and resembles Iris Murdoch's interest in Simone Weil's idea of *Ate*, the automatic passing-on of blows, and virtue as the receiving of blows without returning them. There is a great deal here too, about the nature of masculinity, which I have not space to go into; Henderson's blundering aggression and desire, his disastrous relations with his wives and daughter, are illuminated both by his failure with the peaceful Arnewi (Renewal? connected with the female reproduction of the species?) and his relations with the king of the Wariri (War? male aggression?), who looks after his potency and his body in a charnel-house atmosphere, with a caged female lion from whom he is trying to learn, by a kind of animal reciprocity, pacing in the cellars.

Something riddling is also discovered in the course of the novel about the relation of the world to the mind, which gave rise to the Freudian problem of "omnipotence of thought" already discussed. Henderson has a perfectly modern way of telling his own stories to himself, fitting reality

to his own desires. Before the rain-making ceremony he has an excited sense that he is finding truth:

> What a person to meet at this distance from home. Yes, travel is advisable. And, believe me, the world is a mind. Travel is mental travel. I had always suspected this. What we call reality is nothing but pedantry. I need not have had that quarrel with Lily. . . . I proclaimed that I was on better terms with the real than she. Yes, yes, yes. The world of facts is real, all right, and not to be altered. The physical is all there and it belongs to science. But then there is the noumenal department, and there we create and create and create. As we tread our overanxious ways, we think we know what is real. And I was telling the truth to Lily after a fashion. I knew it better, all right, but I knew it because it was mine – filled, flowing, and floating with my own resemblances; as hers was with *her* resemblances. Oh, what a revelation! Truth spoke to me. To *me*, Henderson. (p. 167)

I used to think that this was the central message of the novel, but that was too simple; it was the spiritual excitement of a hungry and naïve man before the blows of truth. Later, Henderson thinks that

> chaos doesn't run the whole show. This is not a sick and hasty ride, helpless, through a dream into oblivion. No, sir! It can be arrested by a thing or two. By art, for instance. The speed is checked, the time is redivided. Measure! The voices of angels! Why the hell else did I play the fiddle? And why were my bones molten in those great cathedrals of France so that I couldn't stand it and had to booze up and swear at Lily? (pp. 175–6)

The measure he is observing is the king's dance, his artistry, with the beribboned skulls of his ancestors. We might call that a primitive form of culture, the dead assimilated into the form of art. But Dahfu is still urgently involved in the knowledge of the fact of death inherent in that patterning.

Dahfu too has an idea of the whole planet as a mental whole, sleeping, waking, breathing and creating through the imagination. Men may work with the All-intelligent, he tells Henderson, to make not the monsters they have made – "The agony. The appetite. The obstinate. The immense elephant. The shrewd pig. The fateful hysterical" and so on (p. 217) – but "what gay, brilliant types, what merriment types, what beauties and goodness, what sweet cheeks or noble demeanors" (p. 217). Thought has

power for him too, but in some organic possible way. Men dreamed of flying, he says, and now they fly. He associates this with his own understanding of the animal, the lioness, and this causes Henderson to think how he has chosen the pig as his own animal, in a fit of opposition to a Jewish friend who was to breed mink in the Catskills.

Henderson's pig-keeping, in its bizarre energy and doomed violence, is brilliantly done, and is part of a larger vision of the relations between human imagination and the animal world, partly totemic, partly animistic, playing the primitive perceptions of wholeness against the modern desire to recover that sense of wholeness without the primitive closeness. There are the Arnewi cattle in their patience, and the frogs in their watery tomb. There is Henderson's vision of the octopus in the aquarium at Banyuls, at the beginning of the novel, which offers him a vision of a universe of death, and is surely associated with the giant squid who appears as the apotheosis of meaninglessness in *Moby Dick* – "an unearthly, formless, chance-like apparition of life".[27] Dahfu quotes the scientist Kepler on the breathing life of the planet; Henderson sees the deathliness of the octopus in scientific terms:

> I looked in at an octopus, and the creature seemed also to look in at me and press its soft head to the glass, flat, the flesh becoming pale and granular – blanched, speckled. But even more speaking, even more cold, was the soft head with its speckles and the Brownian motion in those speckles, a cosmic coldness in which I felt I was dying. . . . I thought, "This is my last day. Death is giving me notice." (p. 18)

The penultimate lion, who kills Dahfu, is also experienced as death and reality, but hotly, not coldly. There are similarities between Henderson's situation in the lion trap and Effingham's in the bog – both are brought face to face with "the fact of death that stretches the length of life". Henderson says,

> it was no vision. The snarling of this animal was indeed the voice of death. And I thought how I had boasted to my dear Lily how I loved reality. "I love it more than you do," I had said. But oh, unreality! Unreality, unreality! That has been my scheme for a troubled but eternal life. But now I was blasted away from this practice by the voice of the lion. His voice was like a blow at the back of my head. (p. 307)

As in *The Unicorn*, civilised life, even art, even the imagination, are perhaps seen briefly here as strategies for conjuring with or avoiding the

fact of death. In that light Henderson comes to see clearly and diffierently, to be able to return, accompanying a Persian child and the lion cub who is fraudulently and symbolically Dahfu. This vision of this fact succeeds and modifies the visions of the power of the imagination, without perhaps undoing them entirely.

Another aspect of Bellow's choice of the making of rain for the central narrative image of this novel is its relation to the central image of *The Waste Land*. As Eliot used the imagery of the dying god and the Fisher King to express the dryness and the spiritual thirst of his culture as he saw it, Bellow in his comedy uses primitive rain-making as an image for the same thing, and conveys how men, anthropomorphically, associate water with their own fertility and potency. There is a marvellous speech in the middle of *Henderson* where Henderson talks to Dahfu about the seeding of clouds with dry ice by scientists to make rain, and the origin of all life in the foam of the sea, which recalls, though Henderson doesn't mention it, the birth of Aphrodite from the foam of the semen of castrated Cronos. Human beings, savages and civilised, make the world in their own image – note the metaphor in "seeding". It is in this context that Henderson's vision of the clouds from the aeroplane on his return journey is so moving. He is carried over "the calm swarm of the water, the lead-sealed but expanding water, the heart of the water." (Note again the metaphors, not magical, but human, adding human vision to the fact of water.)

> I couldn't get enough of the water, and of these upside-down sierras of the clouds. Like courts of eternal heaven. (Only they aren't eternal, that's the whole thing; they are seen once and will never be seen again, being figures and not abiding realities; Dahfu will never be seen again, and presently I will never be seen again; but every one is given the components to see: the water, the sun, the air, the earth.) (p. 333)

Here is a peaceful, clear and demythologised vision that glories in metaphor but does not use it as magic or religion. Like Iris Murdoch, Bellow uses Frazer's stories and knowledge to show our involvement in myth and ritual and in some way both to show their necessity, indeed inevitability, and to release us from them.

NORMAN MAILER, *ARMIES OF THE NIGHT*, AND MURIEL SPARK, *THE TAKEOVER*

Bellow's great novel was written at a time when there was still a strong sense of the interconnection of myth and art, of the search for the spiritual in the forms of cultural inheritance illuminated by work such as Frazer's. When Mailer came to write *Armies of the Night*, his "faction" account of the 1967 march on the Pentagon, the interest in the irrational, or the pre-rational, had split over into public life. Powell, Murdoch and even Bellow use fictive sorcery, invocations of demons and ancestors, totem and taboo systems to explore our civilised culture, its forms and its roots. The army of hippies and witches in Mailer's work attempted by real sorcery and magical rites to attack the "Pentagon of power" with the Pentagram of magic. Mailer refers to them as "a striking force of witches" and heads a chapter" The Armies of the Dead", referring partly to the poem by Lowell (also present on the march) "For the Union Dead", but also to the appearance of the marchers, parodically got up in ancient uniforms, Indian costumes, and so on. The marchers represent, intellectuals and magicians alike, the belief in the potency, or omnipotence, of thought.

They attempt to raise the Pentagon three hundred feet with a ring of exorcism: "In the air the Pentagon would then, went the presumption, turn orange and vibrate until all evil emissions had fled this levitation. At this point the war in Vietnam would end." They invoke an eclectic collection of gods: "God, Ra, Jehovah, Anubis, Osiris, Tlaloc, Quetzalcoatl, Thoth, Ptah, Allah, Krishna, Chango, Chimeke, Chukwu, Olisa-Bulu-Uwa, Imales, Orisau, Odudua, Kali, Shiva-Shakra, Great Spirit, Dionysus, Yahweh, Thor, Bacchus, Isis, Jesus Christ, Maitreya, Buddha, Rama . . ." – a list which must have grown out of the comparative labours of Frazer and others. Frazer would have no doubt been interested also to know that sexual magic took place: "For the first time in the history of the Pentagon there will be a grope-in within a hundred feet of this place, within two hundred feet. Seminal culmination in the name of peace and brotherhood, a real grope for peace." (pp. 132ff).

Mailer himself has a different point to make. He is afraid that the hippies, who are destroying their own genes with their drugs, are destroying their past, and with it death, and the reality of death. The powers in the Pentagon can put out life and thus death with the bomb; the new drug culture, blowing the mind, is destroying with fantasy the sense of the real, the past, using demons indeed to annihilate ancestors:

> On which acidic journeys had the hippies met the witches and the devils and the cutting edge of all primitive awe, the savage's sense of explosion – the fuse of blasphemy, the cap of taboo now struck, the answering roar of the Gods – for what was explosion but connections made at the rate of 10 to the 10th exponent of the average rate of a dialogue and its habitual answer – had all the TNT and nuclear transcendencies of TNT exploded some devil's cauldron from the past? – was the past being consumed by the present? by nuclear blasts, and blasts into the collective living brain by way of all exploding acids, opiums, whiskeys, speeds and dopes? – the past was palpable to him, a tissue living in the tangible mansions of death, and death was disappearing, death was wasting of some incurable ill. When death disappeared there would be no life. (p. 135)

Here, reached from a quite different point, is the sense that it is the reality of death, which cannot be conjured away, which provides the central meaning of our life. Mailer appears to fear that the destruction of the past, of continuity, biological or cultural, will lead to some form of annihilation by demons. He speaks after all for reason and humaneness, in the middle of an orgy.

I have quoted this scene, which is only tangentially connected with *The Golden Bough*, because I want to suggest that after the sixties the use of this work, and indeed the exploration of myth, became more difficult. Some continuities were broken. The appropriation of Dionysos by those dionysiacs made wise, sceptical, riddling reference to his continuous presence, such as that of *Death in Venice*, less accessible. What Mailer foresaw partly took place. The past, the ancestors, and Frazer with them, moved away rather quickly. We need instant myths, instant gratification, now.

In this context, however, Muriel Spark produced *The Takeover* (1985), a chilly modern comedy set in a house in Nemi overlooking "the scene of the tragedy" – a phrase Spark quotes from Frazer himself, and follows with a long citation of the description of the whole tale of the priesthood of Diana, the King of the Wood, and the fateful branch, the Golden Bough.

The house is leased to Hugo Mallindaine, who claims he is descended from the goddess Diana, and in a silly way sets up in his garden, aided by some modern "ecological priests", a silly modern cult of Artemis which gets out of hand, but, despite Spark's usual cutting contempt for modern religious cults and fashions, is not funny or sinister enough. The

plot concerns the machinations of the very rich, Italians and Americans, who "own" the land around the lake, though they turn out not to own the site of Hugo's house, which belongs to the stolid fiancée of the servant Lauro, a gilded youth (or golden bough?).

All this is interesting, in its sense of the superficiality of our perch on the plundered earth, but there is one sense in which Spark has made a new, very modern metaphor out of Frazer's grove, which is fascinating in its suggestiveness.

> At dinner they spoke of Hugo and of Nemi to where they were all planning shortly to return. It was not in their minds at the time that this last quarter of the year they had entered, that of 1973, was in fact the beginning of something quite new in their world; a change in the meaning of property and money. They all understood these were changing in value, and they talked from time to time of recession and inflation, of losses on the stock market, failures in business, bargains in real estate; they habitually bandied the phrases of the newspaper economists and unquestioningly used the newspaper writers' figures of speech. They talked of hedges against inflation, as if mathematics could contain actual air and some row of hawthorn could stop an army of numbers from marching over it. They spoke of the mood of the stock market, the health of the economy as if these were living creatures with moods and blood. And thus they personalised and demonologised the abstractions of their lives, believing them to be fundamentally real, indeed changeless. But it did not occur to one of those spirited and in many ways intelligent people around Berto's table that a complete mutation of our means of nourishment had already come into being where the concept of money and property were concerned, a complete mutation not merely to be defined as a collapse of the capitalist system, or a global recession, but such a sea-change in the nature of reality as could not have been envisaged by Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud. Such a mutation that what were assets were to be liabilities and no armed guards could be found and fed sufficient to guard those armed guards who failed to protect the properties they guarded, whether hoarded in banks, or built on confined territories, whether they were priceless works of art or merely hieroglyphics stored in the computers. Innocent of all this future they sat round the table and, since all were attached to Nemi, talked of Hubert. Maggie had them very much in her mind and the wormwood of her attention focussed on him as the battle in the Middle East hiccuped to a pause in the warm late October of 1973. (p. 107)

The "takeover" has become a matter of high finance, and the threatened temporary kings are the owners of property, vulnerable to the new supplanters and thieves.

This sense of doom is resolutely comic, and quite deliberately contrasted with Frazer's word for his takeover, the "scene of the *tragedy*". In this new world, tragedy, religion and true priesthood are alike flimsy and ridiculously parodic. Like other of Spark's novels this one must be read in the light of its author's Catholicism, which entails a belief that there is one eternal, though also indeed one temporal, Event, one historical Truth (and, indeed, one significant Death) in the light of which all other stories are approximate fictions – including, it would logically appear, Frazer's demythologising "tragedy" also.

IRIS MURDOCH, *THE GOOD APPRENTICE*

I should like to conclude by looking at a recent novel by Iris Murdoch which returns to the matter of *The Golden Bough* and considers the seductions, uses and dangers of myth in a clear and moving way.

The Good Apprentice contrasts the fates of two young men, stepbrothers, Edward Baltram and Stuart Cuno. The title is riddling – partly derived from Hogarth's contrasted apprentices, one virtuous, one profligate, partly alluding to the Sorcerer's Apprentice. Both young men are in a sense apprentices to Good. Stuart is one of Murdoch's good men who decides to be good. He has no religious faith, so must be, as his author has said we must be in our day, "good for nothing". He practises celibacy, chastity and attention. Edward is a guilty man – he has given a drug to his best friend, who has fallen to his death. Edward is consumed by guilt. Stuart's life, like the life desiderated by the Abbess in *The Bell*, "has no story and is not tragic", though other characters attempt to drag him into theirs. Edward's, on the other hand, *is* tragic, and is crammed with storied coincidences like the Rat Man's omnipotent thoughts.

He receives a strange "message", from a medium whose name he finds on a piece of paper, that he should come to his father. The psychoanalyst of this story, a wise man who sees himself as the mage, Prospero, about to renounce his powers, sends Edward to his real father, comparing this specifically to sending him into the "underworld". Edward's father is a painter called Jesse Baltram – a Frazerian name, since Jesse is the name of the ancestor of David and Christ, whose name is at the foot of the Tree of Jesse in church windows, a Tree Spirit, and "Baltram" recalls

the magic of Beltane fires. When Edward arrives at Seegard (compare the earlier Gaze Castle) he finds a family consisting of three women, "Mother May" (compare Frazer's passages on the May Queen) and her two daughters. At one level this household is a decayed version of the William Morrissey communes of the 1920s, and has things in common with Dr Trelawney's group in Powell. The women wear home-made garments, eat fruit and nuts, and do handicrafts – which are comically useless and incompetent. The house is full of mythic jokes. The absent Jesse has named the leisure room the "Interfectory", whose sinister meaning Edward, a classicist, can understand, but the women seem not to. On the chimneypiece is "a long piece of carved wood on which, between interwoven leaves and fruits was written, I am here. Do not forget me". (p. 111). (Et Ego in Arcadia? And, if in the Interfectory, is the "I" Death?) Edward takes pleasure in the fact that the three women are "three taboo women": "That is part of it all, the pattern or the destiny or the doom or whatever it is" (p. 105).

The house is surrounded by "tree men", literally treecutters who threaten the avenue of populars, but also wood spirits. Jesse, when found, is the captive king, half crazed, with immensely long and vital hair and fingernails, who still has powerful sexual appetites, lusts after his daughters, and is seen as a satyr with furry haunches. There is a sacred "dromos" with a "lingam stone" where one of the girls dances magically without touching the ground. Jesse appears to Edmund under the water, the drowned god, but reappears somewhere else. When he does die, Mother May asserts wildly, "He has metamorphosed himself. He has taken on some other form to renew his strength. He is lying in the woods in a trance, he has become something brown and small like a chrysalis, imperceptibly stirring with the force of a new life" (p. 320). Just before this remark, Edward, looking for Jesse, "reached the path which was so like a stairway made of the roots of trees, stepping upon the crackling brown fruitage of oak and ash and beech which lay before his feet like tiny sacrificial images of gods".

The whole of this part of the text is, as it were, soaked in vegetation myths and the uses made of them by popularisers, by literatures and sub-literatures, since Frazer and his predecessors. It is beautiful at times. It is, more importantly, seedy, sinister, run-down and plain incompetent. If Jesse's art is cruel but powerful, the women's art is neither beautiful nor useful. There is one splendidly funny wooden object, shaped like an elongated bird:

"How do you keep that on?"
"Oh you put it on your wrist and tie it on with a scarf. Or hang it around your neck with a leather thong, you can tie it here, round the bird's foot."
"But then the bird will be upside down."
"Does that matter?" (p. 162)

It might be observed that the whole atmosphere of tree gods and fertility rites, and dying and resurrected father–kings is a little tired, a little *dejà-vu*. But that is precisely the point of the way in which they are presented. The light is murky; the life has gone out of it all. The girls can only play one tune properly, Ilona tells Edward, who says,

"And you used to weave."
"Used to, yes. There was something, it's like remembering history, something long ago to do with salvation by work, and it was religious and anti-God, that was a point, a sort of socialism, and like a kind of magic too, and being beyond good and evil and *natural* and *free* – that's what's so tragic, it was something beautiful, but the spirit's gone, it's gone bad, perhaps it was always sort of too deep a kind of knowledge, with something wrong about it, or rather we failed, *we* failed, he was too great for us – but that's what made Jesse so alive and full of power and *wonderful* as he used to be, as if he could live forever. And of course we had to be happy and we *were* happy, I can remember that, and now we have to pretend to be happy like nuns who can never admit that they have made a mistake and that it has all become just a prison." (p. 200)

Edward works out his salvation amongst these dying myths – including Arts and Crafts socialism and Nietzschean morality, beyond good and evil. His story began with drugs and a crime, and is involved in art and magic.
Stuart's story is by contrast austere. He demythologises and strips the human spirit. Thomas, the magian psychoanalyst, suggests to him that he may envy Edward "his extreme situation".

"No, why should I?" said Stuart, surprised.
"It's one way of breaking up illusions of self-satisfaction."

But Stuart is suspicious of stories and resists mystery.

> "It's dark inside, Stuart."
> "You mean original sin. I'm not concerned with those guilt stories. Oh, of course, you mean the unconscious mind!"
> "Don't tell me you don't believe in it."
> "Nothing so positive. I don't fancy the idea. It doesn't interest me."
> "Perhaps you interest it. Don't despise the concept. It's not just an abode of monsters, it's a reservoir of spiritual power."
> "Spirits. Magic. No, I don't like what you've just said. It's a misleading bad idea." (p. 141)

And Thomas reflects that "The dark powers, as the ancients knew, were essentially ambiguous; and thus, as Stuart instinctively perceived, enemies of morality."

Critics of the novel perceived Stuart as somehow horrible, thus echoing Jesse, who, brought face to face with him, cries out, "There's a dead man, you've got a corpse there, it's sitting up at table. . . . That man's dead, take him away, I curse him. Take that white thing away, it's dead" (p. 292). Stuart, that is, represents among other things the bare recognition of the *simple* "fact of death that stretches the length of life". He is part of Iris Murdoch's recurring debate between the saint and the artist, and, if Edward's tragic story is redeemed by art, Stuart's is redeemed by attention to unadorned facts and rejection of magic. Stuart too has his journey to the underworld. He tries to meditate in a church, and can't stay. He descends into Oxford Circus Underground station, and feels "a new and dreadful feeling of shame, a shameful loneliness and sadness and grief, as if he were both banished from the human race and condemned for eternity to be a useless and detested witness of its sufferings" (p. 447). He looks into the dark, onto

> the black sunken concrete floor of the track. Then he saw that there right down at the bottom something was moving as if alive. He frowned and focussed his eyes. He stared. It was a mouse, a live mouse. The mouse ran a little way along beside the wall of the pit, then stopped and sat up. It was eating something. Then it came back again, casting about. It was in no hurry. It was not trapped. *It lived there.*

The energy of the novel, despite the power of Edward's guilt and grief, is on the side of the simplicity of Stuart's attempts to strip himself of the tangle of habits and beliefs and rituals that are in some sense represented by the Seegard house and the power of Jesse's art and male presence. (Though at the end of the book "Jesse lives" is found written on walls.)

The mouse is in a sense the fact of life, which is in some the same thing as the fact of death, seen simply, and as a kind of revelation of truth, or reality.

NOTES

1. Lionel Trilling, "On the Teaching of Modern Literature", *Beyond Culture* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966), p. 14.
2. "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth", *The Dial*, November 1923; repr. in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 175–8. See especially pp. 177–8.
3. Trilling, *Beyond Culture*, p. 17.
4. Page references to these novels are given parenthetically in the text. The editions cited are as follows:

   Iris Murdoch, *A Severed Head* (1961), *The Unicorn* (1961), *The Good Apprentice* (1985), all London: Chatto and Windus.
   Anthony Powell, *The Kindly Ones* (London: Heinemann, 1962), cited from Fontana reprint (London, 1977); *Temporary Kings* (London: Heinemann, 1973); *Hearing Secret Harmonies* (London: Heinemann, 1975).
   Saul Bellow, *Henderson the Rain King* (New York: Viking; London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), cited from Penguin reprint (Harmondsworth, 1987).
   Muriel Spark, *The Takeover* (London: Macmillan, 1976), cited from Panther reprint (London, 1985).
   Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: The Novel as History, History as the Novel* (New York: New American Library; London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), cited from Penguin reprint (Harmondsworth, 1970).

5. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* in *The Pelican Freud Library* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), XIII: *The Origins of Religion*, pp. 183–4, citing Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy* (London: Macmillan, 1910), IV, 97ff.
6. *The Pelican Freud Library*, XIII, 106.
7. Ibid., p. 140, quoting *GB 3*, I, 420.
8. *The Pelican Freud Library*, XIII, 142.
9. Ibid., pp. 143–4.
10. Ibid., pp. 148–9.
11. Ibid., p. 130.
12. Iris Murdoch, "On 'God' and 'Good'", *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 51.
13. Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1953), p. 62.
14. Freud, XIII, p. 92, quoting *GB 3*, i. p. 295.
15. *The Pelican Freud Library*, XIII, p. 73, quoting *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn, XXIII (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1887), 15–18. Frazer's article is reprinted in *Garnered Sheaves* (London: Macmillan, 1931), pp. 80–92.
16. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 68.
17. *The Pelican Freud Library*, XIII, pp. 98–9, quoting *GB 3*, III, 7ff.

18. *The Pelican Freud Library*, XIII, 99.
19. *GB 3*, III, 258.
20. *GB 3*, IV, 265.
21. *The Pelican Freud Library*, XIII, 104.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 133.
24. Ibid., pp. 121–2.
25. The news of Sarajevo occurs on p. 72.
26. *GB 3*, I, 297.
27. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, ch. 59; p. 382 in the Penguin edn (Harmondsworth, 1972).

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